"Where there is no vision the people perish"

SEPTEMBER 1945 OCTOBER

The POETRY REVIEW

THE JOURNAL OF THE POETRY SOCIETY (INCORPORATED)
AND A MAGAZINE OF GENERAL
POETIC INTEREST

THE GREENWOOD 1945 REPORT AND POEMS
NEW LYRIC AND POETIC PLAY COMPETITIONS

Published Bi-monthly by
THE POETRY SOCIETY (INCORPORATED)
33 Portman Square · London W1

American Editorial Office:
299 Park Avenue · New York

ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE NET
Annual Postal Subscription, 9/6; U.S.A., 2.50 dollars)

"The leading poetry magazine of the world . . . of international eminence"—LITERARY DIGEST

THE POETRY REVIEW

No. 4 1945 Vol. XXXVI

CONTENTS

★

Orpheus and Dionysus, *The Greenwood Prize Poem*, T. E. Casson 213

The Father Questioned, Ruth Pitter 218

Elegy for Two Voices, Dallas Kenmare 220

Beauty is Deathless, Eleanour Norton; *Song of a Lover*, Jas. Crawford Milne; *£10 for a Love Lyric* 224

Verse-Writing in Schools, Mary Holliday 225

Silence, Molly W. Gilbert 230 *Waves*, E. E. O. Mullins 233

A Time for Poetry, Richard Garrett 234

The Invalid, Juanita Peirse 237 *Approaching Towton Field*, George Lea 238

Caged, Cuthbert Woodville Harrison 239

Intelligentzia, Nancy Pollok 240 *The Wind*, Catherine Blakeston 241

Embankment Garden, Ruth L. Cook 243

O Lone Cold Wind, Padraig O'Horan; *Narcissus*, Ivery Bartholomew 244

This Sunlit Day, Phyllis Lyth; *To a White Moth*, Caroline I'Anson 245

Thames-side Sonnets, H. W. Harding; *Fragrant the Night*, Leslie Knights 246

I Shall Come Back, H. Trevelyan-Thomson; *I Know a Valley*, W. Booth 247

The Stranger, J. B. Stocks; *Airborne to Arnhem*, M. Sheppard Fidler 248

Poets and Pretenders, *A Faithful and Axiomatic Survey* 249

Young Soviet Poets, Nikolai Potashinsky 261

Dynamics of American Poetry, CVI, Alice Hunt Bartlett 263

An Arresting Pronouncement by William Rose Benét 269

The Enduring Flame, Harold Vinal 270

The 1945 Greenwood Poem Report and Award, Herbert Palmer 272

Writing is All, A. D. Shandley; *Substitute for Sense*, Diana M. Moore 276

The Premium Editor's Report, An Important Announcement 277

Recessional, W. H. Bartlett 279 *Fisherman's Son*, Charles Bruce 280

Notes, Reports, Announcements, New Test Pieces, etc. ii

All Literary communications should be addressed to the Editor, The Poetry Review, 33 Portman Square, London, W.C.1. No MSS. can be considered or returned unless accompanied by stamped addressed envelope. The Editor accepts no responsibility for the safe custody or return of any MS.

Trade Agents: The Rolls House Publishing Co., 2 Breams Buildings, London, E.C.4.

Printed in Great Britain by Unwin Brothers Limited, London and Woking, and Published by the Proprietors, The Poetry Society (Incorporated), at 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, England.

The Poetry Review

THE JOURNAL OF THE POETRY SOCIETY (INCORPORATED)
AND A MAGAZINE OF GENERAL POETIC INTEREST

VOL. XXXVI 1945 NUMBER 4

THE GREENWOOD PRIZE POEM

Orpheus and Dionysus—An Agon

PERSONS

CALLIOPE, mother of Orpheus, as Prologue:
ORPHEUS:
DIONYSUS:
CHORUS OF MAENADS, as Epilogue.

CALLIOPE, as Prologue

On the snow-cold Olympus peak, the world
Is domed as a shell of song, a dewy globe
That the wise Fates touch with a hand so pure
That mortal ears may know not, but the eye
Sees the white music as an unmeasured deep
Of harmony. And oft-times thou may'st gaze
Into that silence when the clouds of dawn
Are the snowy chords of a harp that Apollo's hand
Enraptures with the ever-living rose
Of new creation. And again at eve
There falls from the still heaven innumerous foam,
Cascade upon cascade of leaping light,
Orbs glaucous and of pearl, and each a world
Tossed like the stars in rhythm; and the spray
Falls singly earthward, till the euphony
Is lost to the very eyes. For the clear sight
Of the gods upon Olympus sees the colours
Themselves as music—the long waves of the friths,
Moving still shoreward in the laughing sun,
And in the frosted moon the silent foam
Slow-heaving seaward, and about the caves
Breaking in unheard murmurings. And the green
Leaps in the larches with the praise of joy;
And carmine in the poppies by the shore

Hymns of blood's anguish; and the amethyst
Of heather is the dew of Eros' wings
Beating in the world's dawn. The whole Spring
Comes northward over Imbros with her palms
Most swiftly yellow in the barren woods,
The golden chords that the sweet harping wakes
To murmur by full brooklets; and wind-flowers
Are snow in the hazels like the first solo note
Of form in Chaos; daffodils on the rocks
By the sea might Artemis stoop down and pluck,
Wandering from heaven through the pathless glens,
And twist a flower in her hair, and so depart
O'er the wide sea-ways heavenward, bearing so
A golden gleam of song like the sun's ray.
So is all earth an antiphon of light,
To the high Olympians as a robe of Iris
Woven of dew and gold and amethyst,
Wherein no mortal ear, no mortal eye
Could mark or snatch the hues from the sound, the sound
From the multiplex glory of this finite orb.

ORPHEUS

This is the new God from the angry East,
Which hath no cool rills that Narcissus knows
To image his white beauty, as the Hours
Dance by them, chapleted with the white spray;
And Naiads in the dark deep pools by the rocks
Draw down swift-footed boys to their mossy caves—
A land of flashing water and cold song,
Temperate as dawn, where wise Sophrosyne
Is law-giver to the Muses, and Harmonia
Fashioned the world to a harp of seven chords.
So we have known, in this new tranquil earth,
With the dew by the rivers, where creation yet
Is very near. But the dark East is old,
And the beginnings hidden. And men there
Are darkened with the passions that dim years,
Purifying not, have thickened in their blood,
And clotted in their brains. More than all other,
It is a race that generations old
Curse with accumulated ills, where father
Hands down to son a passionate heritage
Of blood and will perverted. And now the East
Like a mad river throttled long, bears down
The barriers that enchained it, and is a torrent

Poisoning mankind. And Dionysus takes
The godhead of the earth, like a red sun
Going westward in a heaven of thunder-cloud.

DIONYSUS

Ye err, who think that the earth ye see is young,
And cool and quiet like a meadow-land,
Or a wise harmony of a few notes.
It is the child of Fire, the cruel God;
And in man's veins is Fire. God kindled Fire
In the morn of Time, perchance a little fire,
Such as a shepherd lights upon the hills,
Or a house-wife on the hearth. And he breathed upon it,
And it flamed outward, and God thought it good.
And when God breathed, he made the winds; and the wind
Seized the wild flames, and wrought them into a circle,
A hollow ravening globe. And the eddying spires
Spun round in the Whirl; and all was a wilderness
Of storm-swept Fire. And when the heat was great,
God made the waters to assuage his thirst,
The ocean and the rivers, and thought them good,
And all delicious places, with cool groves
And deep and restful shadows for his pleasure.
God plenished earth with waters, and it was moist,
That he might wander in the woods by the sea,
And dream by his own image in the mere.
And when God saw the beauty of his form
Mirrored in the waters, he was filled with love
Of his own beauty, and bethought himself
To create man in his likeness. And so man
Was made the son of God. But know ye this
That Fire was first, and of the fire was water,
And of the water earth; and man, of earth
And water, which are Fire. And so man's soul
Is Fire, and his blood is Fire, a maddening flame.
His heart is war and passion, and his brain
A fire that burns for knowledge; and excess
Is of God's nature. So I bring from the East
To this still quiet land, passion of the sword,
Passion of love, passion of the brain, and the grape
That assuages thirst, and, after thirst allayed,
Maddens to the sword, and passion of love and the brain.

ORPHEUS

It hath been said in Thrace that men stole fire
From heaven as the most secret gift of the gods,

The virtue of the immortals; and the Fire-bringer
May have thrilled the veins of men with that swift ichor.
So Hellas holds. But by the Hebrus' stream
And under snowy Pangaia, where the Muses haunt
And the fierce sun-god mitigates the wrath
Of Syrian arrows, and in ice-flecked streams
Plunges his white immortal limbs—Apollo,
As though a man than others more divine—
Easy it is to know that he delights
More in the white sea and the flashing rills
High on the walls of the mountains than the bronze
And molten caverns of heaven that he thrids.
For God repenteth of the primal fire
Wherewith he first made all things, and yet more
Of brazen worship and fiery sacrifice,
And the red scythes of the chariots, Asshur's temples
And brazen-coated warriors red in the sand,
And bloody knives and flaying; but in blue isles,
On snowy peaks, he seeketh other beauty.
For now Apollo more than the brazen towers
And molten streets of Ouranos, on Olympus
Is in love with the deep lakes and the deep shadows
Under the precipices, in quiet noon-day,
Where all the hills are molten, not to fire,
Angry and loud and dry and without soul,
But to a tenuous ether that is flame
So white that it is the very soul itself
Rarefied from all cruelty. From the cauldron
Of Eastern incantations, where the flames
Are ribbed like thin and flinty knives, that are hard
As the world-polity of Ninus, there exhales
A vapour like the form of unmade hills
And waves without the parching breath of fire.
This is a world that is soul, in the ancient form
Fashioned of fire but knowing not malice, and beauty
That hath no terror. It is the former world
Not arid and pitiless, the form of fear
To man, a fascination that attracts
And is alien, an evil eye of glory and hate;
But a world re-made when God was merciful
And filled with love, so that his love draws men
More and yet more without the recoil of hate
That lurks in the kiss of thin-lipped fire and the sting
Of the thin-winged asp at the fire's central hearth.
But the mountains are the spirit of love itself,
Whose wings enfold their lovers like the wings

Of Eros spread about the world in the dawn
Of Time; and like Eternity their soul
Calls to man's soul with the endless speech of joy,
Flawless without betrayal or distrust.
Theirs is the cup of ecstasy more pure
Than the grapes of Dionysus; and the thirst
Stung into man's blood by the original flame
Is allayed more wisely by the blue of the hills
And violet of the lakes. This is the marriage
Of the soul and sense of men with the soul and sense
Of the world, and draws him to Eternity.
The naiads of the spring hold their white arms
To draw white Hylas to the deep cool wave;
And the white arms of the mountains and the lakes
Draw the white soul of man to the deep cool wave
Of being. There is no infinity in Fire
For man, but annihilation; but in love
Of the hills and lakes and rivers, Infinity.
Man's soul, escaping from the lid-less eyes
Of the Sun in heaven, and the glazed looks
Of the desert East, finds in the dreaming lakes
And shadows of the pines from the jutting rocks
And stars in the still pools of swirling streams,
Purity and Eternity, and Love
That is the soul and sense of Eternity.

CHORUS OF MAENADS, as Epilogue

The Maenads are larches
    On the bare hills,
Nodding and swaying;
    Their thiasos fills
The steep ravines and the flashing rills.
And when Spring comes the heart of the larch
Takes glory in the winds of March;
And the heart of the Maenad wins new fire.
From the breath of Spring; and with wild desire
    Looks out from the cliffs on the ways of the sea.
        And, in high noon, the golden sun
        Makes pathways where their feet may run
        Across the waters; and their eyes
Drink the bounds of Oceanus—the skies
    Pale in the heat of the summer noon,
    Rose in the sunset, isle on isle
Of cloudland through the sheer defile
Of the walls of heaven that open wide
On immemorial Night's dark tide;

And most soul-taking green when the sun
Is down, and scarce have the stars run
With silvery lamps above the darkling sea,
Virginal in that immensity.
And Eurydice
Is golden in the light of the sun by day,
And her limbs white as the sea's white spray,
And all her raiment as the green of eve,
And, as the green of the larches on the hills,
So leaps the Maenad by the swift-foot rills,
Flashing as they,
A white, glad, tossing, naked mountain spray.

T. E. Casson.

The Father Questioned

MY mind alights like a bird in the dark tree.
Now in this rain the old cones will be falling,
But I will think of them new in their spring silver—
Silver under the waxen green netted with rose,
Like rare pale luminous shells adorning
The solemn deep-sea levels of heavy boughs.
Dead father, your bones lie under the cedar.

O tell me what was meant by the sun's affliction.
The raw new sorrowful houses, the unmade road
Saddened the sun. O but my heart was heavy!
How could such sadness be? For love had fled them
Even from the foundation; they blasphemed
The deep deep Law: they cried abomination.

Sad in the sun, the road drooped down to the sea.
The hot salt slipway glaring in desolation
Remembered the woe of the sea. The screaming bird
Swooped on its offal, my soul. The unreturning
Haunted the quays. Where was that place, dead father,
And did you too mourn by that shore of sorrow?

The spectral gaslight of the wet street in winter
Was the pale squalid banner of man's affliction.
O father, who was the noseless man, and the child
With angel eyes, and face all covered with sores?
What was the woman screaming? Why did they take her
Away, and where? Had someone hurt her, father?

The unemployed are marching, singing of hunger.
Why are they hungry? the shops are full of food:

Why can't they have it? Now they've turned into soldiers,
And must fight and die. Why must they die, dead father?
Who says they cannot have food, and then says "Die"?

But as for the hyacinth, crocus, daphne,
They speak so plainly, do not ask an answer.
The sweet smell, gentle form, and the brave shining
Are what we seek; why is the rest not so?
Straight to the heart comes the poor plant's bright legend,
Like a strong word for ever lucid, faithful.
The dropping woodbine in the rainy hedgerow,
That was my love; and the young yellow sallow,
And the gold-spangled birch-tree's scarlet mushroom.
But you spoke on of the world's ills, dead father.

Father, there is something I cannot tell you—
There are no words. It lives behind the sky.
It is there in the tree, and in some people's faces,
Like music, like the lily of the valley,
Like a green grave and like a happy morning—
O even in the grass, even in dew.
Did you too seek it, did you try to find it?
Perhaps have found it, for I feel the answer
Steal through the blood and bone of your begetting.
Speak to me from the blood, my living father.

Child, that is love that lives behind the sky,
Yourself sought weeping, orphaned, sore lamented.
The music and the lily of the valley
Are the vile houses and the desolate harbour,
The sad, the hungry men, the howling charging
Infantry, and the general despair.
The noseless man, the mad-drunk woman screaming,
Are the bright crocus and voluptuous daphne,
And the sore child the delicate woodbine springing.
It is you who make them one. That is your treasure.
Can you seize heaven and hell by the two horns
And bend and string them? Can you be that Eros?

The child must understand the sun's affliction,
Green grave, and weeping night, and happy morning.

Ruth Pitter.

I was surprised, upon reading Geoffrey Moore's "Portrait of the Artist as an Anarchist" in the POETRY REVIEW, that no mention was made of the one poem of Read's that *is* great, "Song for the Spanish Anarchists," and I say that despite the fact that politically I am not pro-Read: also, no mention was made of his probable second best, "Bombing Casualties": THOS. ASTORE, Romford.

Elegy for Two Voices

THE COMING OF AUTUMN

Héloise speaks:

THIS is an autumn song, this is the song of the grave abbess of the Paraclete,
once the young, the passionate girl who in the spring of her days fell in
worship before the mind of Abelard—
(strange that they do not understand the passions, the hungers of the mind)—
To the young, the ardent Héloise the great Abelard was a god,
a god who fed her starving mind with the golden bread of Olympus,
whose every word was weighted with richest ore.

And now I am an ageing woman who has hungered through the seasons, the years,
watching the falling leaves, the stripped branches, the swelling buds and the full
leafage of summer—
still I live, the blood growing quieter with the passing of youth. . . .
Quieter, yes, but the blood is not all—there is the hunger of the soul, the cry of the
bereft heart, the lonely mind—
the blood is not all.

This is the autumn song of Héloise, watching alone the drift of the falling leaves,
watching with a heart restless as the autumn sky,
And though I say spring will come, though I know spring lies waiting even in the
womb of winter
till in the darkest days it quickens and grows impatient for birth,
though I know Earth, the Great Mother, will cry Alleluia to the Lord of Life
and go at last garlanded with flowers, haloed with sunlight,
yet now the leaves of the heart flutter and sink into the eternal earth
and I feel the touch of autumn, the merciless and merciful,
autumn that comes with wild skies and wild cries, heralding winter and cold pain.

And I, the holy abbess of the Paraclete, would hide, not in the sanctuary of God,
but in the arms of my beloved,
would shelter with him from the menace of inevitable pain;
from the cold hand of life and of age I would be shielded by his love.

I fear now never to know ecstasy again. . . .
my days pass in a monotone of devotion;
I speak wisdom to my children in God, and myself have learned no wisdom,
have learned only with the passing years that without Abelard there is no life,
that I live on only as an empty shell as I smile serenely and mete out wise words to
my questioning daughters;
I have grown cold and empty, I whose arms were created for love's embraces,
not to be folded severely on my breast in a humble attitude of devotion,
I whose hands were made for the healing touches of love,
not to be clasped, closed, in a meek attitude of prayer.

My life is a blasphemy, a lie,
I am no holy abbess, no aspiring saint;

I am a woman who desires only love, the love of Abelard,
I am weary of pretence, of pious simulation.

A great chestnut-tree stands in the convent garden, old and very steadfast. . . .
year by year I watch the branch-pattern on a changing sky.
Now from the tree the leaves fall again, one by solitary one,
and always with the changing of the seasons comes the heartbreak, the abortive hope. . . .
Slow leaves drift on the still air,
hopes fall, one by solitary one,
I see the years patterned on a restless sky.

Slowly the leaves fall from the chestnut-tree, the seasons pass. . . .
Must I endure till death this same landscape, this beautiful scene that speaks now only of my failing hopes, and the loneliness of the passing years?

Already the first shadow of age has fallen upon me,
silently, unawares, as the first pale gold leaf falls from the lime-trees
and the green and the sweet scent of summer has gone—
and I ask, what did we make of summer, we who enjoyed a few short hours of mountain-air
only to turn, lacking courage, and descend to live on the plains, mistrusting the heady air,
deluded by thoughts of a heaven purer, fresher, more crystalline than the mountain-heights of earth?
We were given wings—no feet could have climbed to those impossible heights, though they were swift, too swift, to descend—
so the wings drooped and shrivelled, and at last fell from us,
and we cannot recover them, they will not grow again. . . .
It is useless to pray, the gift of wings is not offered twice to any man.

Yet sometimes there is peace. Sometimes in spite of grief and the hell of separation
all within and about me is still as an unshadowed pool at dawn,
and there is a serenity limpid as the pale saffron light of the dawn sky. . . .
Then my love reaches beyond space and time, beyond the region of the furthest stars, and even in separation enfolds my beloved,
my heart sings silently, poems and chants of praise and illimitable love,
and every breath I draw is worship.

THE COMING OF WINTER

Abelard speaks:

The first frost has fringed the fallen oak-leaves, there is a crackle of ice on the rain-pools as I pass. . . .
last evening the sky smouldered at sunset, and a great star flashed crimson fire over the dark sea,
pulsing with the pulsing of my heart. . . .

the heart I have wrestled to mortify into submission, till now I am weary, mortally tired of such struggle and such failure, and laugh bitterly at my hollow philosophy—
"He saved others, himself he cannot save"—is it ever thus with the saviours? Failure may be the condition of success . . .
Such thoughts are food for bitterness indeed!
'Hail to the Lord's anointed!"—and the oil is the gall of agony—
I would beg leave to be exempted from such anointing, these favours from the Almighty are not welcome;
I have not sought the role of redeemer—yet I cannot escape, there is no way of shedding the burden.
The lime-trees are bare against the November sky,
limes that in sun-drenched summer sing with scent and the ceaseless murmur of bees,
sing, sing of summer and the delights of young love. . . .
Now the branches are bare and the tree draws nourishment from the cold earth,
not from the passionate sun.
And I, when I too was young and drew life from the sun, deemed myself very wise;
I had a ready answer to every question; God, I believed, had given me insight into His pattern,
I was quick to prescribe for every ill.
Then came Héloise, the girl all woman in body, all man in mind, and in soul the flawless child—
then came tragedy and bliss, and confusion began, mocking at my theories,
till now I see no glimmering of a pattern, and the words "God's will" are themselves the deepest confusion,
though my children in God still look to me for guidance, and believe that the famous, the great Abelard is wellnigh omniscient—
small wonder I smile bitterly.
For I know only that I have stumbled and failed,
know only that I was offered, and rejected, heaven,
know only that for ever now the sour fruit of error turns my life to wormwood,
and the days are a malicious mockery, and each returning season brings its fresh measure of pain. . . .

Sometimes it surprises me to realise how little value I attach now to "ideas,"
how little I, the passionate thinker, care now for the thoughts of wise men. . . .
Always now I would know something of their experience, and of the nature of the suffering that gave birth to their wisdom;
I would know whether they speak of what they believe and have proven true, or of what they wish to believe,
and sometimes almost delude themselves into believing—as sometimes I do. . . .
Often I turn from philosophy, theology, even from poetry, saying, "Once I, too, thought, felt, thus. . . ."
Now it seems I have passed beyond common suffering into a condition numb as flesh that has suffered mutilation and has healed.

I marvel as I recall the easy assurance and glib optimism of my youth,

the lightness of my heart as I sang my songs among the blossoming cherry-orchards of April—
Now in the dark middle years the Spirit has driven me into the wilderness, into the cold and the dark—
I have learned something of the Temptation. . . .

I am certain of nothing now but the great fact of God,
and care nothing for labyrinthine speculations on the Divine Nature;
I am weary of the war of ideas, and marvel that I was destroyed for a doctrine—
the Trinity will exist eternally without any impassioned defence from me, or from anyone. . . .
It seems that the mind is the destroyer and the soul alone has wisdom,
which is a mystery, for the wisdom of the soul is wordless.

Love and the nearness of Death are the merciless masters that teach humility;
there is no more room for the proud mind, nor any further thought of power—
the relentless, beneficent mills have ground the mind to powder,
I am broken and made new. . . .

There remains the great fact of God, and the friendship of Nature. . . .

Now the frost has yielded to the wooing of the midday sun;
delicate branch-fantasies are mirrored in the rain-pools,
and the wide ploughlands are a motionless sea of shining furrow-waves, overshadowed by searching gulls;
on the monastery-wall bright jasmine-stars glimmer, and beyond the garden the restless breakers foam around the rocks. . . .

I turn my face to the sun, the low midday sun of November, and hold in one vast gesture of love the whole miracle and glory of the natural world—
I who was once a poet, a singer, a passionate lover of trees and stars, wild winds and mild winds, woodland and sea and flower,
fall now in worship before the beauty that is ever my friend;
I would be quiet and commune with the beloved who never fails, who is ageless and immortal, on whose breast I find solace and peace.

And I, Abelard, once the trouvère, the maker and singer of songs, know now that I am guilty of a twofold betrayal,
I, a creator, called to worship God in new songs springing from the deep wells of the soul,
laid aside my pen, and have worn away my latter days in the repetition of prayers and chants made by other men;
I who was called to be the lover of Héloise, to reveal through our love the glory and meaning of the bond between man and woman,
turned aside and listened to other voices—and have learned now that in turning I turned away from God.

Dallas Kenmare

1 5

"Beauty is Deathless"

(WRITTEN IN 1944)

ALTHOUGH our earth is shaken by the roar
Of cosmic battle, though her breast be red
With blood a million of her sons have shed,
Though mighty wings in aerial combat soar,
Yet the celestial truth still stands supreme—
Beauty is deathless. Neither sword nor shell
Can slay her, nor Teutonic hordes of hell
Destroy the least irradiance of her gleam.

Music shall triumph when the guns are still,
Flowers shall glitter on the hero's grave,
Sculpture enchant, and poesy will sing;
The silent magic of a lonely hill,
The silver glory of a foaming wave,
These must outlast all wars—all conquering.

Eleanour Norton.

Song of a Lover

THE earth will be hushed when I meet my love.
My spirit will rest like a bird asleep,
I shall see the wings as they softly fold
And joy will fill me that never was told.
A silver moon will enlighten the deep,
And all will be still when I meet my love.
The dawn will be rose when I kiss my love,
And lilac will cluster sweet on the tree.
The golden laburnum will flame at last,
Nourished with ashes and mould of the past,
And the sun will dance on a silken sea.
The birds will be gay when I kiss my love.

Arbroath. *James Crawford Milne.*

£10 FOR A LOVE LYRIC

THE POETRY SOCIETY offers an annual premium of £10 for an original Love Lyric to be published in this magazine in the spring of each year. The form will be without restriction, but the length should not exceed thirty lines. The entries will be judged by a small committee of the Poetry Society. Competitors must be members of the Society. All entries should be typewritten, bear the name and address of the sender, and be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, and be addressed to "Love Lyric" Comp., 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, before December 31st. The winning poem and one or two runners-up will be published in THE POETRY REVIEW, without prejudice to later publication by the author elsewhere.

Verse-Writing in Schools

"I am afraid of the shadows of the moon,
Which look so ghostly when the grasses rustle."

THESE lines were written by a child of nine. Is this of interest to the teaching profession, or to others who work in the cause of English literature?

Nearly a generation ago, THE POETRY REVIEW made a feature of criticism of verse written by children. Today, when "the child" has become so important in life, it is well to consider the present place of children in the world of poetry. During the past thirty years there have been rapid and widespread advances in education. It has been recognised by Professor Cizek in Vienna that there is such a thing as Child Art as distinct from adult art. Children have their own contribution to make to the creative heritage of man, and this creative impulse is for them an essential means of self-expression: its results are not to be judged according to adult standards or conventional rules of merit. Children have been allowed for many years to indulge their creative desires in paint, but verse has remained among those forms of art which are regarded as pre-eminently adult. Yet language is used before paint by most children. The convention is valueless and is being broken down by slow degrees. Children not only enjoy writing verse, but through it may at times achieve poetry and almost invariably become better able to appreciate the great poetry of the world.

Educators have been lamentably slow in applying modern methods to the study of poetry in the lives of young children. It would be foolish to ask children to understand the Italian Renaissance painters if they had never handled a paint-brush themselves. Yet great poetry is read in schools to children who are expected to enjoy what is to most of them a craft in a material quite unknown to them. The consequence of this has all too often been a systematic killing of the children's power to love poetry.

Few children write verse without any outside stimulation at all. Since poetry is a language, though some are able from birth to speak it easily, others need to be taught its grammar and given practice in its use. Part of the work of schools must therefore be the teaching of this language. Children learn French grammar at school and write exercises in French before reading Molière or de Vigny. This apparently obvious method does not seem to have been applied very often in the case of poetry. This does not mean of course that poetry must not be read at all to children who have not written verse; all children should be given every opportunity for hearing poetry but should not necessarily be expected to love or understand it from a passive point of view alone.

In order to survey the use and value of verse-writing in schools, it is necessary to justify its inclusion in the work of modern schools, to examine the methods which can be and are being used and to analyse some of the results. There are, unfortunately, many legitimate reasons for the absence of verse-writing from the work of many schools and the interests of many teachers. There are those who would teach it if it were not for the lack of time and the demands of the public examination, the latter requiring detailed knowledge and appreciation of poetry but no practical experience. There are many cases of individual teachers who occasionally teach verse-making, but relatively few schools where there is a general interest in the subject. Wherever children have encouragement and some help in writing verse, however, they are far better able to benefit from the passive and receptive study of poetry.

The Poetry Society has always stood for promoting "a clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry and the strength and joy to be drawn from it." Therefore it should be the special concern of any of its members who have any connection with the teaching profession to promote also the teaching of verse-writing in schools. If children's verse is never regarded as merely a poor copy of the poets, and if its making is regarded as a pleasure and not as an exercise to be corrected, it is an essential part of every child's education. It is justified by its value as "an outlet for emotion," as E. A. G. Lamborn calls it, and as a way to the full enjoyment of all that poetry can mean.

Verse-writing is taught at present in a small minority of schools in this country, but in representatives of many types of school. Examples of schools where there is real enthusiasm for this vital work include Junior and Senior Modern Schools, High Schools, Grammar Schools, private schools and a boys' public school. These are scattered through many counties. Verse-making for young children is also under discussion in Training College lectures in English Method. There are so many ways of approach that every teacher should be able to introduce some form of verse-making in any type of school under normal conditions. Even in schools where the public examinations limit the scope of the work it has been found possible to combine prosody lessons with the criticism of poetry and to set occasional verse exercises instead of prose composition. In many secondary schools the magazine provides encouragement for young writers. This is excellent in that it ensures spontaneity, but it tends to leave the field to the talented few; the aim of teaching verse-writing should be to establish verse as a medium of expression with possibilities for the less gifted majority.

An ideal environment which is stimulating and beautiful as well as restful is rarely found in schools, yet even in overcrowded classes children can learn to use verse and later to love poetry. The two-fold aim of expression and appreciation makes the practice of writing verse an essential key to the whole range of poetry. In choosing methods Keats's doctrine must be remembered: "If poetry come not as naturally as leaves on a tree it had better not come at all." Technique must be acquired gradually by children and an atmosphere of freedom and enjoyment must always predominate.

When verse-making is attempted with children under ten, the best approach is usually through the idea of verse as picture-making in words. Simple prose similes, one word descriptions and imaginative word games provide a beginning. Children will instinctively use the concise pictorial language of poetry as the child's description of snow as "white rain" shows; another in the same class wrote "White carpets fall upon the ground" as easily as if he were always speaking in the language of verse. Scarcely more than a reference to music in words is needed to encourage the sense of rhythm and pattern which is innate in most young children. When words have gained for them the added value of picture-making, lists of words describing a given subject can be built up as an oral class lesson and individual "free verse" descriptions follow without stressing the fact that the children are trying to write in any unusual way. After such a class lesson, when the subject was "Night," a child of eight wrote:

"The night is here,
With silently moving and shivering shadows."

Subtleties of rhythm, alliterative use of letters, contrast, colour, movement and any other aspect of poetry can be turned into an exciting word game for young children.

No word which has really meant something to a child need be discarded and in this way poetry loses the "precious" quality which is so often associated with it in the minds of misguided parents and teachers.

Exercises in the choice of words are often helped by the reading of poems. In discussing the music of verse James Stephens' *The Main Deep* and other poems which depend largely on word music are useful. Children have a great power of musical expression in words, even when it is oral and not written verse. In *Songs and Pictures of a Child* by Bland, there are many examples of a small child making word music entirely for the pleasure of the moment. This power is still seen in the words of a girl of fifteen:

"And there in Spring, where fluffing owlet hoots
The windflower rears its dainty progeny,
Fathered by the West wind, born of fantasy
And living ever on the Spring air's lutes."

The suggestion of subjects has never been found cramping, and a story will, for example, provide excellent material for ballads. This is usually the simplest formal metre for children, but form need not be stressed until children are about thirteen or fourteen or show a particular desire to learn formal prosody. A free interpretation of any formal metre or verse form should always be allowed and children readily invent their own metrical and rhyming patterns. These opening lines from a young boy's verses on Drake show the curious rhythmical subtlety a free use of form can produce:

"Drake he was a rover bold,
He sailed in the *Golden Hind*,
For his heart was cold
And he had a rover's mind."

It has been found very valuable to combine verse-making with school subjects other than English. Such correlation is of little use, however, if it is forced. Lessons such as geography, nature study and painting can be linked with the writing of verse, and some history teachers have found great value in the occasional setting of verses on an historical subject as an optional alternative to the usual essay. F. C. Happold in *The Approach to History* quotes the work of a boy of fourteen on Richard Cœur de Lion:

"My friends, I am not troubled oft with dreams,
You know I am not prone to break my word,
But I am at the end of all my schemes
And I have come at last to sheathe my sword."

In some schools the imitation of the style and subject matter of adult poetry has helped older children in their own verse-writing, but this method should be used sparingly and regarded as a strenuous literary exercise for those who have already themselves developed a more adult approach to poetry. Whatever method is used, any teaching of verse-writing in schools should ultimately have a definite link with the appreciation of poetry. After a course of verse-making lessons a class of ten-year-old children in Cambridge having made a book of poems themselves declared unanimously and sincerely that they now enjoyed poetry more when it was read to them. They were helped very much by regular friendly criticism of each other's

work, during which they were encouraged to pick out and praise lines which had struck them as particularly pleasant in rhythm or some other way. They could then easily say why a line of a poem appealed to them and they learned to see in poetry which was read to them later the same beauty of design or word use they had at times admired in work they had actually written themselves. A boy who had called trees in winter "ghosts in the silver shadows" could fully enjoy Alfred Noyes' *Sherwood* when he heard it, while before he had made verse himself it might have meant little or nothing to him.

No attempt to survey the work done by schools in the teaching of verse-writing would be complete without an analysis of some of the results which have been obtained. If those who think children cannot write verse studied these results, they would find that beyond writing verse with enjoyment and often with great ease, children are worthy to be given a place along with the lunatic and the lover in their kinship with the true poet.

During the past generation the earliest verse written by children was chiefly of an intellectual and rather ambitious nature, modelled perhaps too closely on adult forms but none the less highly praiseworthy as indicative of a growing interest in this kind of work in schools. The work published in the *Perse Playbooks* shows that the encouragement given to boys at the public schools in the writing of original verse in Greek and Latin has led to much sensitive work in blank verse and the sonnet form. More recently, when adult poetry has passed through many phases of "free" form, children's less formal work has rightly been encouraged. The results, whenever and however they have been obtained, are always most satisfying and justify the use of the methods of teaching. The teacher can have fewer delights greater than that of discovering that the child who has been taught to write verse has written poetry, even if it is only one phrase which deserves that name. The following examples are from verse written by children ranging in age from about four to eighteen and from a number of widely differing types of school. They show the child as a poet, setting down his thoughts with sincerity and intuition, with order and rhythm, with beauty and precision. There is some of the poet's essential "rightness" of words in

> "The world which is so grey and worn and old
> Still hopes that nature will be green some day,"

and in the very young child's "I want to think to the other end of thinking."

Ease and music are found in:

> "His face was like the image on a tomb,
> Peaceful and quiet, as if he slept and dreamed
> No unquiet dreams"

and

> "Sea and stars would turn and the sun,
> Turning and turning till the end of time
> And after."

The quality Lascelles Abercrombie defines as "incantation" is seen in:

> "the fiery will
> Of flames, that gloating dance in mastery"

or "Spun of the sunlight were her clothes."

Perhaps the best of such work comes from the verses written by children at home,

purely for their pleasure, but where verse-making has been taught at school such work is always more abundant and where sympathetic help has been given verse-writing is an ever greater pleasure because the children feel in possession of the material and skills of their craft.

It would be interesting to examine the world-wide aspects of verse-writing in schools. This is not easy under present conditions, but information recently obtained from America shows that in the United States there is a very great interest taken in this side of modern education. It may be that the facts are more consistently before the public eye than in England, but it seems that the average school in America gives greater encouragement in verse-writing and a great deal of experimental work is being done. Both the vastness of the continent and the virility of young American writers are seen in the results which are obtained. Verse has become to the American child a medium in which any thought, not of the traditionally "poetic" kind only, may be expressed. There is very little convention and much condensation. The following shows the vigour of the average high school boy in verse-writing, from a poem entitled *None*:

"They are not men,
They are only echoes of men. . . .
Days were which were not hell-gaps
Between night and skulking feverish night
A chain-gang of days and nights
Each worse than the rest."

An account taken from a recent American educational magazine shows a lighter side of expression and reveals the progressive methods used. A book of poems was made by children from rural and mining communities in Western Virginia. Here choral reading formed part of the prelude to verse-writing. A group poem started the collection. Afterwards the children said "When you have participated in writing such a poem you will find a new liking for poetry." This sums up the aims of verse-writing in schools, whether in America or any other part of the world. Here is a quotation from the individual work of one of these children:

"My eyes have looked upon the quiet river, bordered by trees and hills,
And the muddy water of a mighty river after days of rain."

Those who teach verse-writing in any school find great beauty in children's work and great joy in the children themselves. These teachers, true educators, are seeking the best methods so that through the provision of a new means of self-expression children may learn to love poetry, and those who love poetry should wish all children to learn to love it. Few children can enjoy poetry fully unless they have learned to write verse themselves; their attempts may be imperfect, but in the realm of art it is not the place of the adult to pass judgment on children. The majority of adult readers find poetry too "difficult," but teachers of this generation have it in their power to create a coming generation of readers who have a real love for the greatest poetry. Such a universal and eternal language should be within the reach of all for use and enjoyment. The development of verse-writing in schools may well lead to a renaissance in poetry.

MARY HOLLIDAY.

[Apropos the foregoing article, the following poem, highly commended by the Premium Editor, was written by a girl of seventeen, and is an example of the sincerity, power of word-picture-making and self-expression in verse which youth can achieve. The writer has most probably been studying Keats and allowed her (often excellent) double adjectives slightly too free a rein: Editor.]

Silence

I HAVE a secret treasure that no man may steal,
Not in a casket locked and fragrant, rarely seen,
Not an escape from life; rather an added scent
That lingers round the bustle and the noise of streets,
That waits beyond the verge of din and shouts and cries,
That flies with swallows's wings above the busy roads,
And waits me in a quiet bush of lavender,
The other side the dividing wall of noise.
Silence is my treasure. I have loved the talk of friends,
The happy hum of busy market places,
But in my treasure I have found an added joy;
Even blaring noise serves its turn, in contrast to
Its din I hear my silent dream come flooding back
And in its wash the little sounds of silence.

In silence I can count again my hoarded sounds
And let them trickle through my fingers; summer hay
Has little crackling sounds, and grasses are the harp
Of every passing downland wind; birdsong I love,
And rain, her little loving fingers; and the voice
Of many waters, winter's song; and then the sounds,
The loveliest sounds of man-made voices in eternity,
The bells, that peal the hearts and hopes and fears of man
Up to the stars, and catch the throat with tears of joy.
The colours of the sounds of bells are wonderful,
They change and melt and shimmer as their voices ring
Above the crowded town and drowsy village,
From gold to lilac-blue, from silver to the web
Of gorgeous fantasies that weave about a peal
Of bells, and drop their threads, their liquid drops of sound
Like cobweb over quiet counties and the hills
That lie in mystery beneath the lonely sky;
More I hope to store, sounds I have never heard;
Goat-bells in Crete, and songs in Spain, and sails of ships,
Sounds of the last-winged trees of man's wind-wide dominion.

Life is a noise to most of us now. Who shall escape
All the rattle and din? Here is my balm, my treasure,

Queen of all sound, the realm whereto the infinite sounds
Of the world and time linger in peace, thrilling the waves
Of silence sweeping through the air. The hands of my soul
Reach into that vibrating kingdom and I hear
Again the sounds of eternity; the laughter
Of the happy folk in Knossos Palace Courtyard;
The creaking of the oars of Grecian ships threshing
Aegean seas to Troy; the sobbing whisper
Of the dying slave-boy, calling on his mother,
A lonely agony among the whips and flies
Of a sun-hot Roman yard—remembering water
And cool grass and kindly hands; the rustle of Italian
Cypress trees, the eternal, lipping sob of water;
The piping of a shepherd boy on sheep-white hills;
The laughter and the singing and the swearing
Of the sweating folk at country fairs; the laughter
And the tears of all humanity; the thud of drums,
The high shrill note of pipes, the honey chords of harps
Accompanying the frenzied dancing to the Gods;
The glorying cry of new-spread sails, the rush of sea,
The songs of many a million sailors, songs of every sea,
From Cretan trading ships, hailing afar the sunny
Snow-clad heights of home, to Viking long-ships sighting
Unfamiliar shores; the swish of quick-drawn swords,
The gasp of death; the kiss, the moan of pain, the words
Of love and hope; and songs of children's games;
The shuffling tread of bare feet on a dusty road,
Up to the violet-circled glitter of the Parthenon,
Or down the sunset-road to Egyptian wells,
Or through the quiet grey dust to a Mexican church;

And down the centuries and ages the immortal beat
Of man and horse and waggon plodding on along
The roads of all the world, along the thread-fine fingers
Of the roads, green and brown and white, beneath the sky,
The ever-changing sky, beneath the pure dawns
And flaring sunsets, splashing through the fords with laughter
And climbing up into the hills with hard-drawn breath;
Always the Roads, that some men made and others followed,
And down the years I hear the pad of bare brown feet,
The weary click of hooves, the shouts as wheels are fast
Embedded in the mud; the chatter and the cursing,
The cries of children, the happy whistling through their teeth
Of men who lead the horses; the crackle of the flames
That cook the evening meal and keep away the wolves;
And voices too, the voices of the folk of all the world;
The quiet voice that whispers low with love, or sleep;

The gasping voice of jealousy or hate; the cry
Of thrilling courage, and the song of happiness;
The quiet loving voices of Iberian folk,
Voices that can throb with passion, that can lilt with love,
That can shout in war if war must come to them,
That can sing so sweet that words are jewels in their mouths;
The harsher voice of Saxon and of Dane, that speak
Of warfare and of food; the ironic whine
Of starving gypsies; and the scratch of pen
That sets down all the words and all the thoughts of men.
Quietly they wait for me, beyond the cloak of noise.

Silence is but one mighty song; older times were right
When they have spoken of the immortal music of the spheres.
It is too high and sweet for us to catch, yet
We may feel its glory in the music of the light,
The song of the sun and the moon and faint-voiced stars;
The golden symphony of the sun, the grace-notes
Of the lark; the clashing of the silver cymbals
Of the moon, with the faint high flute-notes of the stars.
Words and music are immortal, they slip gently
Into oblivion, and we touch a string or pipe
And they are hovering round us once again.

This is my secret. There are thoughts in my silence
That no other one can ever know; they are mine
And mine alone. I can slip from the blare of traffic,
From the shrill-voiced crowds, into a Cretan palace room,
Shadowed and cool, where the frieze of dancing girls
Seems to move with fluttering drapery in rhythm to
The hush of rain in dark-green leaves beyond the portico;
I can slip into a Deptford tavern room
Whence men have fled and left a still and silent lad
Whose life oozed out with dagger thrust, whose crimson doublet
Is stained with darker crimson still—only the embers stir;
I can slip into a Syrian street, thronging with folk,
Tall Achaeans, sea-raiders from Cyprus and Pamphylia,
Laughing Cretans, swarthy Hittites and Phoenicians,
In sunny streets beneath the brilliant awnings;
And I can push among the lithe dark folk with lovely skins,
Who crowd the dusty trackway up to still, grey Avebury,
Hearing the different dialects of old Iberian England,
(Fishers from Northern shores, miners from Cornish hills),
From purple slopes along the mighty hill-top roads
They come, and high above the shining eyes of men,
Above the shifting, coloured crowd, the lovely line
Of green and daisy-starred great Silbury is quiet

Against the song-filled sky, the blue lark-magic
Of Midsummer Day;
Take the cool hand of flower-crowned
Silence, and we will go across the thyme-breathed hills,
And up the lost green roads where winged cloud-shadows pass,
Past primrose-crowned ramparts and the tangled thorns,
The birds a-flutter round us in a mist of song,
And, swept up with the music, the lovely flowers
Of little white and purple-threaded orchis of the hills
Are dancing on the sweeping hems of drowsy hill-top winds;
I pass against the summer sky with all my loves,
And flowers and music and the human forms are gone.
Only the silence is left.

Molly W. Gilbert.

Waves

I STOOD in thought beside the Cambrian Sea,
No life had yet appeared on earth or shore.
No other human there could speak to me.
There was no vision of the forms to be;
It seemed that sea must thunder evermore.

God had created land in the watery waste
And spent in contemplation certain years.
He heard the waves pursuing, as they raced,
Set rhythms, but could not rebuke their haste,
Since nothing there had either eyes nor ears.

If one had come to stand beside Him there,
Commenting on His complicated skill:
(Vast clouds that peopled all the upper air,
A million years of rain while earth was bare)
How startled had He been; but all was still.

The slow creation moved through cell on cell.
A thousand myriad years of toil and strife.
The striving millions rose and throve and fell.
And God looked on, and said that all was well;
Until men came to crown the tree of life.

Like God I stand and gaze, but nought is still.
I see the waves of generations pass,
So crowded through their hurried years, alas!
But here and there is left a little hill
Cool with the green simplicity of grass.

E. E. O. Mullins.

A Time for Poetry

I ARRIVED in England after three years in a German prison camp on the day following VE-day, expecting to find a change. Instead, I found a transit. The country was, and is still, experiencing a "half-way" period which is neither peace nor war: it is the changing of the seasons, the insinuation of light upon darkness. We are preparing ourselves for the first progressive period of peace since 1914. At such a time we must assess our capital; we must taste the quality of what has gone before in order to build up our ideas for the shape of things to come. Above all things we must assess our poetry, for poetry is the fusion of all ages, the expression of the one-and-indivisible life.

As an introduction to such a task, *Poems of our Time* (Richard Church and M. M. Bozman, Everyman's Library) is timely. But first of all, I suggest a glance at *The Island*, by Francis Brett Young (Heinemann), which provides the broad canvas of the background, whereas *Poems of our Time* are concerned with the immediate detail. Perhaps, like myself, you may find the 449 pages in which Mr. Brett Young eulogises upon the epic of British achievement a rather too florid splash of poetic heraldry. That is not the poet's fault so much as that of his material. National accomplishment is always ponderous in retrospect, and, sometimes, tawdry. Nevertheless it is a background, a grande finesse where honesty and dishonesty meet on their no-man's land —a banner.

In concerning themselves with the poetry of the past forty-two years, Mr. Church and Mr. Bozman have completed a well-knit pattern. I liked this anthology particularly for its arrangement. The editors' concept of serial time, as opposed to a temporal jumble in which poets are taken one at a time regardless of how their works fit the design of chronological order, gives the collection a unity, the theme thread which is all too often lacking in anthologies. Thus, the work is a whole—the whole of forty-two years in which one can experience growth and decline. There is, however, one omission, and this, I feel, a sad one.

In compiling a period anthology, the editor must embrace the representative whole of the poetry with which he is dealing, in much the same way as poetry must embrace the whole of life. Both must be complete. Every mood must be featured in one manner or another: love, tenderness, compassion, amazement, hunger, desire, repose, irony, satire, humour, etc. etc. Certainly humour, for that is the balancing entity which keeps a discreet check on precocious proportions. And here Messrs. Church and Bozman fall short. They please to ignore light verse where it might well be included, perhaps at the price of omitting some of the less outstanding serious works. Why not A. P. Herbert, or Hilaire Belloc in his lighter vein? Ruth Pitter strikes occasional moments of genius, when handing out satire. Light verse is worthy of consideration, good light verse is worthy of retention.

May I now be permitted a definition? The perpetual what-is-poetry? and the original-idea-answer. Poetry is a dramatic reflection of an age or a movement. Or—it is a reaction, a deepening of the soul brought about by hardship, intellectual or otherwise.

A study of the Everyman edition, which is the reference book of our time, will indicate constant voices running through. The Romantics, the Classicists, and the Antics—or, if you prefer it—the Moderns. These are the reflectors. There are also

groups which crop up in two clearly defined places, survive for a brief moment of glory, then pass away, leaving behind them the seeds of their immortality. These are the reactionaries, and war produces them. War kills poets, but ensures their immortality.

The reflectors of our time immediately provide a conflict. The Classicists and Romantics in one camp, the Antics in the other. Sooner or late, lovers of poetry will have to decide who are most worthy to reflect the coming peace for them. That choice is a purely personal matter, and can only be reached through an intensive reading of the works of both parties. But—may I offer comment? The essence of Art is good manners. Art has its own morality, which is parallel to ethical morality: it will not tolerate selfishness. Obscurity in an Artist is a sign of selfishness—I find the Antics obscure. I will leave the comment at that.

It is not so much with the reflectors that I find my immediate concern, but, rather, with the reactionaries, for they are of my time. I have shared so many of their experiences that their reactions matter to me in such a way that it transcends my delight at the work of the more secure and stabilised schools. But—one must attempt to compare the work which has materialised from this war with that which appeared during and after 1914–1918.

It seems to me that the poets of the second world war have a greater depth than their predecessors. They are content to accept nothing at its face value: there seems to be a deep-seated power surging within them, restless, dynamic, grappling for fragments of truth. One is aware of a concern, almost obsessional, with death. That is natural enough, for in times of war and preludes to war, the fear of death is omnipresent. But this preoccupation is a healthy one, if not for its possessors certainly for poetry. The presence of death makes men truthful and sincere—there is not time to be otherwise. The reflector poet who writes in safety can afford a trick or two with truth to achieve an effect. The war poets cannot—they are too close to fundamentals, they have to be sincere, completely sincere.

But sincerity is not the only beneficial effect of death-consciousness. It results in an attempt to use poetry as a connecting link between the finite and the infinite, or, if you choose to be philosophical, between the third and ∞ dimensions. This link is vital, for life and death are complementary. Death is no more the opposite of life than the words of a song are the opposite of the music to which they are set. Death is the sinister music to which life is set. Life and death must be regarded as one if one is to bring about an aesthetic and temporal whole. All art owes its origin to birth: if you care to analyse the construction of any worth while work, the parallel is to be found in the orgasm which forms the conception of life. But if birth and its prelude are the construction, so must the work embody the merging of the limited sphere into the unlimited. The supreme work of art is one which achieves this merger, and the war poets, Sidney Keyes in particular, come very near to it.

War tends to bring out the poetry in mankind, and, looking through a selection of the works which this war has produced, I find that the poets fall into three classes. Those who know what they wish to express and who have the necessary poetry to to do so; those who have a rough idea and who have smattering of poetry, mostly jargonic, with which to tell it; and those, the voices of some millions of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and men and women who have seen the bombs dropped, who are

aware of some force within them, some force they know not of what nature which is clamouring for an outlet with few words or technique at its command. Theirs will always be bad poetry, very bad, but, nevertheless, significant. It is the safety-valve for an immense inner conflict and is produced by pain and spiritual unrest. Sometimes they creep into print and one has the chance to witness their immaturity of expression: this is a pity. Poetry in the soul does not necessarily mean poetry on paper, nor is the soul public reading matter when scarcely presented as such.

I mentioned the difference in depth between the poets of the last war and the poets of this. In this comparison I am excluding such writers as Rupert Brooke and Siegfried Sassoon, who must, war or no war, have developed into poets of lasting quality. Rather do I refer to that fresh congregation of soldiers, who have found music in a Flanders poppy or a dugout on the Somme.

The difference between the two generations seems to lie in tenacity of thought. The 1914–1918 brigade, when perplexed, inclined to leave the question at "ah—what shall we do?", or "ah—where have they gone?" There was no sifting of the soil, none of that fevered burrowing to the core of the problem which characterises the poets of to-day. The reason for this is, I think, the ease with which fundamentals may be fobbed off with heroics. This applies particularly to the hooded metaphysical monster—death. A man dies for his country. He dies well. In his grave a "richer dust concealed." That is heroism; heroism is final; there is no more to be said about it.

But to-day there is little romantic heroism. The bands no longer play, and there is no hysterical flag waving. The world has matured into a globe of realities; a globe where fundamentals must be explored for truth, that truth may be faced. There is no longer talk of the ecstacy of battle, for battle is no longer ecstatic. It is an intensely nasty business which results in a great deal of misery. I do not for one moment suggest that it was any better during the first world war: in fact, I suspect that it may have been worse. No—the quality has not altered, but, rather, the approach to the quality. We now wish to go further, to reconcile mortality with immortality. We do not read poetry for escape, we read it that we may be able to say: "there lies a glimmering of truth."

Keats says of poetry: "Its touches of beauty should never be half-way, thereby making the reader breathless, instead of content. The rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should, like the sun, come natural to him (the poet), shine over him, and set soberly, although in magnificence, leaving him in the luxury of twilight."

Thus Keats. Beauty is truth, as truth is beauty. Before the war, the truth tended to come half-way since the inner conflict was not strong enough. Consequently the poem failed to set in magnificence. The twentieth century has brought with it a life of increased physical intensity, thus detracting from its emotional intensity. The result is a falling off of power in art. But war has awakened the spirit through the protest of man to war.

So much for the war poets, and so much for the whole. The poets of this war who survive the conflict are the link between the reflectors and the future. I feel happy about that future, happy because never before has there been so much inward turmoil; because intellectual strife is the birth pains of good poetry—the restless mind and the untiring imagination. We may look forward, I feel sure, to a new era of verse, a positive one, and, eventually, a triumphant one.

As postscript, here are a few notes on recent collections by recent comrades in the Forces.

The Dancing Star, by Peter Railing (Spottiswoode, Ballantyne). This shows promise of better things to come. At the moment, the writer is handicapped by a certain over-exuberance of phrase and a tendency to confuse "poetic jargon" with "poetic language." *V-Letter*, by Karl J. Shapiro (Secker & Warburg), written by an American serving in the Pacific, won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1944. When Mr. Shapiro hits the gong it rings with considerable power of drama and humanity. He achieves some fine effects, but, sometimes, he misses. Then the result is disappointing mélange of boisterous effort.

If Sidney Keyes were alive, he would be dubbed as "promising," "forceful," "sensitive," and a few other adjectives: mostly complimentary, mostly slightly patronising. But Sidney Keyes is dead, and Sidney Keyes was a great poet. Perhaps the world will condescend to pay attention to him, and grant him his deserved immortality. His *Collected Poems* (Routledge) are his monument.

Alun Lewis is another young poet who died in action. Again we find power, the striving to blend the finite with the infinite. We also find a wealth of poetic imagery, particularly in the descriptive passages in *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets* (George Allen & Unwin).

RICHARD GARRETT.

The Invalid

HOW he is fallen! So shabby and graceless now
After his kingly exit. A tramp, who wears
His drab ill-fitting skin distastefully.
He has no proof, no certainty, he must allow
The mercy of men's tolerance to succour him,
Rejecting the private charity of tears.

Sickness engulfs him, dark and baffling. No doctor
Offers him recovery, or death, but a pale
No-man's-land, where life is stretched and thinned to his own
Pulse-beat. A phantom stage, himself the actor,
Heroic with jest and disciplined to laughter.
He shrugs, knowing his own capacity to fail.

Now he lies fifty fathoms deep, on the sea-bed
Of his dreams. The amber tides of retrospect flow
Over him, and farewells chime upon his heart
Like old drowned bells. All his magnificence
Shapes to a cunning fish, that with accomplished art,
Sneaks from his loosening hour, as traitors go.

He gazes painfully at familiar things:
Unsensingly. The airy spinning dance of leaves
In the poplar trees, the clematis like frail
Immaculate stars, the first disclosure
Of the saffron rose, the homely warmth of russet wings.
These are the things he sees, but not perceives.

He has no will to wear the thorned crown of beauty:
To hear the message tapped on the hollow
Shell. Love danced for him among the poplar leaves. Love
Was the stainless star of clematis, and the rose
Breathing. Love was winged, and had a warm russet heart;
But love is the running deer he may not follow.

He is without security; a child before
The empty nursery grate. His toys have vanished,
And the lap with the rustling apron is not there.
It is late, the shadows threaten, but no
Candle of deliverance burns at the open door—
Night is a black eternity, and a child, banished.

He is alone with fear, his new accomplice:
A craven bondage with the thief of reason.
Fear creeps and seeps in his veins, pursuing his blood.
Fear of the known and of the unknown, of the lies
Men tell themselves. Fear, the spectral nemesis,
The indelible canker that rots the wood.

He craves to utter some mystical runic prayer,
But will not let weakness urge him, to trade
His fear for a charm. He cannot petition the Power
He forgot to praise, in the splendour of living.
—Sleep covers him suddenly. He is not aware
Of the secret process that rendered him unafraid.

In sleep the embryo spirit quickens within
His heart. He accepts the partnership, and wakes
To a conscious knowledge of his basic self.
Tired, but divinely resolute, he hears
His personal overture to life begin—
Bursting from bird-throats as the morning breaks.

Juanita Peirse.

Approaching Towton Field

THE sweet winds blow and fetch us to October,
Brown clods and the stacked harvest of the wheat.
Even the sun must stint him and be sober
At noon and dusk; the year is in retreat.

And we are in retreat, but let's forget it:
Blood-royal all of us and England's bones.
What we have done is done, and why regret it?
There was some grain among our tares and stones.

Leeds, 2. *George Lea.*

Caged

WE live in a cage, you say, and would have me believe,
That we pace round and round or fly up to the top
But can never get out. Oh comforting thought!
In a cage, with a keeper, who sees that the creature
Is fed, has a bed, or a perch. I wish it were so.
But it's prattle.
In a cage we'd be safe—bars, bolts and a never-ope door—
If these kept us inside yet they'd keep others out.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I was once in a garden of cages—high up on his crag
Four hooves close together, head boldly thrust out,
Stood a ram of the mountain sheep and he snuffed at a taint on the breeze,
Snuffed and stood still and defied the sender of taint on the breeze,
Whilst she, the sender of taint, a lioness, lay in her cage,
Paw crossed over paw, and glowered and grimmed at the ram,
Through her bars. It came over me then, a soul-shocking thought—
The prey was safe from the hunter, safe in his cage, and the hunter safe caged,
And their fate was a privilege I'd never know.
For I am the hunted and know not what hunts me.
Yet one thing I know—he will get me at last,
In a net, with a gun, by a dog, on a hook,
With a spear or a sword or a knife, by a petty bacillus or parasite,
Or bludgeon me out in some smash, drown me perhaps in some sea,
Or bubble me deep in a lake. He'll get me—upon my bed
Or in some secure hour he'll out me in some obscure way.
When I'm young or I'm old or betwixt.
He's certain for some time. He's always a-hunting.
The tail of his horse never quivers, his mounts are all fresh,
They carry him bravely. Perhaps he's afoot.
Then his legs never tire, nor his wings if he flies
Nor his fins if he swims nor his paws if he moles underground.
Perchance he will tread out my life, in a rage, as an elephant,
Or, slow and slow, consume me. Who is he? I am not to know
But I dreadfully care and I wish that I knew.
But I never shall know nor will any one, ever.
Is he a simple machine which motions unknowing
Have set to a task unknown?
Is he a person, a creature or is he a spirit,
A vapour of gas or a riot of atoms,
A molecule dance in just chance,
Haphazard, colliding, evading?
What for me can it matter? And yet I dreadfully care.
He'll out me at last—when I've run my last yard
Or have let down my guard.
He hunts me and hunts me and hunts me and out in the open I run.

I'm the hare on the open down and he is the greyhound.
I'm the fox on the stiff ploughland and he is the foxhound.
I'm the buck on the sandy plain and he is the cheetah.
I'm the fish in the wide sea also and he is the seal.
First I run him out of sight then I run him out of scent,
Then I run him out of pace, then I swim him out of breath.
Agility serves me and strength, yet cunning no less and intelligence,
Sheer scientific intelligence, gathered through years.
I run and resist, snapping over my shoulder.

* * * * *

You prattle of cages. Ah, no!
Man is out in the open—hunted.

Budleigh Salterton, Devon. *Cuthbert Woodville Harrison.*

Intelligentzia

BEHOLD the promotion
Of the homely corduroy
From agriculture to culture!
The accents of Oxford issue
From a throat clad
In a shirt of bottle green and a raucous necktie,
And the feet of our young intellectual
Walk in suede shoes.
And whether despite or because of
This sartorial surrealism
His soul is intense,
Concentrated on "schools" and "movements,"
Little theatres and neo-Georgian poetry,
All the " 'isms" and " 'ologies"
Of these chaotic times.

But were he less refined, he has much in common
With the Bohemian that his grandsire knew.
He lacks only
Full-blooded humanity,
The flair
For joyous carousal on empty pockets,
And the ability to create
On a grand scale—
But lacking thus, lacks all!
His interests are little and precious
And so he remains
A finnicky highbrow
In an epoch of rough catastrophe
And tremendous event. *Nancy Pollok.*

The Wind

AS a breath, swift born
Against a pulsing heart—
There comes the wingless wind,
Impulsed from an unseen urge—
From the beat of a mighty passion
In-drawn, out-sped, intermittently.
Vast voids, in high velocity
Break loose with furious force,
And circulate the Earth
As unseen, swift propulsion:
The beat of plumeless wings pulsates the air—
Like homing wild-duck beat their trackless way.
This moving atmosphere
Adventuring where it will,
Be-stirs great oceans into furrowed waves,
And seas arise to dread immensity.
The vapours of the sky
Are hurled across the light
In gathered majesty—
Endarkening, cumulose.
Great expiration breathes upon the clouds,
And earthward drives in droves
The steel-grey drops of rain.
Tall trees are tossed into tortuous appeal
By mystic might—a power invisible.
Then softly—as the approaching touch
Of lover's lips—a tender wind
In gentle mood, feels fondly
For permission to caress,—
A whisper in the dusk—
A touch intangible—a sigh,
And all the mighty presence of the wind
Is humbled into shy address
And tentatively sought response.
A scented breath exhaled upon the night,
Is mingled wind and blossom—
Mated Beauty, sweet, immaculate.
The rhythm of the trees
As they swing their supple branches—
Is the wind in light fluxation,
Swaying leaves a'lilt and dancing
On the shining summer hours.
A bold, warm, westering wind invades
The sacred silence of the woods,
Releasing whispered utterance
Of woodland wisdom, old.

The periodic, measured wave—
The ocean's rocking rise and fall
Is the spirit of the restless wind
A'move upon the wakened waters.

When budding Dawn
Anticipates the quickening Sun,
The star-borne wind
Will stoop with a caress,
And flush her blossoming
Just opening to the Light.
Then taking flight to earth,
With softened touch about the flowers,
The wind, in gentle visitation
Lifts their petaled eyelids open,
Wakens sleeping buds with kisses—
Intimately daring this.
Then awaits the wind, abated,
While the bees possess the flowers,
Hushed its whisper, stilled the advances—
Silence—save a murmurous hum . . . .
Dewdrops shaken from the grasses
Know the passing of a breath;
Hair-bells ring upon the downland
When the wind comes wooing sun-beams.
By the meres sweet notes of music
From the wind-filled fluted reeds—
Echo by, soft ruffled waters,
Calling wild-fowl, there, to nest.
Birds will glide a'down the wind-slopes,
Wings but tacking on the air;
Hawks a'hover—wind supported,
Seem suspended in the sky.
While in secret, birds are nesting—
Hidden in sweet privacy,
Wind may have the privilege
Of rocking, lightly, feathered cribs.
Playing with the wind in autumn,
Rooks will circle overhead,
Swept together, in rotation,
By the wind invisible.
When the forest forge is flaming,
And the trees release their leaves—
Wind will go a'winnowing
Down amongst leaf-laden lanes,
Blowing into heaps, the treasure
Molten by the summer Sun.

Illusive and intangible,
The wind will whistle through the spheres,
None can intervene, nor handle—
"Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?"—
God alone could implement
The rushing, mighty wind, as voice—
Proclaiming advent of Himself—
The Word released—in tongues of fire.

For some, this visiting spirit
Is Breath of God—
The Breath of Life breathed forth
From first creative impetus.
A vital force is felt—
Inhaled as a draught
Of new, invigorating life—
Celestial air, in-drawn
By the Earth-bound supplicant.
This Lover's breath
Comes passing by the lips
To stimulate the love-beat of the heart,—
And as the quickened pulse vibrates
In true response—
New life is born,
New joy, new hope, new peace.
The human temple, then,
Will open wide its doors,
So the sweet, pure Spirit-wind
May sweep away
The false, the vain, the obstructive doubt,
And fill the opened being
With the Living Breath of God. *Catherine Blakiston.*

Embankment Gardens: (To H. C. M.)

WE walked in the pale March sunshine, listless and spent;
Drained by War and Winter, with shoulders bent;
Pallid of face and weary, from long routine,
Our tired garments touching; silence between;
And pausing where many a crocus pierced the black mould,
We felt their speechless beauty cry out in purple and gold;
Silent were we of voice; silent of heart;
Stilled was the graceful speech that made Love start
And quicken and break into colour when first we met;
Passion was pale between us, Darling—and yet—
Deep Peace lay dormant within us, like an exhausted dove,
Resting the grey, spent wings of our deathless love. *Ruth L. Cook.*

O Lone, Cold Wind

YOU that have known the sorrows of ten thousand years
Now beat and cry against these walls
Wherein I shelter from your wild foray.
The quiet room is shaken by your grief,
And my besiegéd heart awakes to pray
The wordless prayer that—lost among these hills—
Was prayed by all the ancient Dead
Upon whose silent place you cry in vain.

Or is it vain?
For voices seem to move and mingle with your own
And wander through the darkened fields,
The lonely places where the dark and trembling trees
Mutter and mumble toothless to the skies—
The wide encircling darkness flecked with grey
That holding like a cup the withered husk of night
Presses upon these walls insistently.

Only one voice it has, or one that like the winds
Cries out in sudden grief upon these hills,
Carries its shadows and its sorrows here
That all the tides of being thus may flow
Into a wordless grief
For which our tears are but a bright dew of the shade
So sad it is, so dark, so far removed
From all the listening heart has ever loved.

O lone cold winds,
Since I have shut you out—
Why do you enter in?

Padraig O'Horan.

Narcissus, 1945

WILDFRET, anxiety,
Blank despair,
The waste and misery
Upon which the fixed eyes stare.

The fixed and blood-shot eye
Of revengeful lust; yet,
Also the bursting heart
Of sick humanity.

Can we not relax
The rigid brain
Poisoned by terror?
Can we not unfix
The frozen eye
Held in horror
Upon what man still does to man
Coldly . . .
In one Italian Square?
For here is no way. . . .

But what of the way
Of the Star and the Lily?
The way of the child
And the holy Mother . . .?
Turn we to the rippling water
To her white sweet-scented flower,
Whose blown back-curving petals
Still sing up to the skies. . . .

May 1945.

Ivery Bartholomew.

This Sunlit Day

I WOULD rather die on this sunlit day
Rather than be
Old in the far cold years;
Rather go, passionately longing to stay,
Longing to sing,
Longing to see
The old surprising rotâ of Autumn
And Spring,
Summer and snow;
Loving them, living them, hating to know
Now in my fire, in my pride,
I must go.

Rather be crushed as the fire in the forest
Is crushed,
From spreading of flame into smoke,
Sweet-scented and hushed,
Than smoulder as rags that decay
Evading the fire
In fumes reluctant, unlovely and slow,
Refusing to stay,
Refusing to go.

Go, in the glory of sun and the joy and desire,
Go, in the summer of life, in the smoke and the fire.

Phyllis Lyth.

To a White Moth

CEASE pleading so with me, importunate,
Beating your wings against the window pane,
For you will flutter 'neath the stars in vain.
Better the cool soft night under the pine
Than lodging place within with me and mine.

Ah, do not plead with me, importunate!
The light that beckons you is but a jest,
A mirage, made to follow man's behest;
A lure perhaps to-day, yet gone to-morrow,
Beware, it brings no joy but burning sorrow.

Ask me not yet again, importunate!
The window latch is closed, the shutter barred;
For you night-scented stock, the many starred,
And pale tobacco petals open wide—
Stay then, insistent one, come not inside.

Caroline I'Anson.

At Hurley

O, ANCIENT stream, bearing a Roman name
Through sun and shadow down the leagues of time,
Benign with sweet forgetfulness you came,
A sun-lit Lethe, to our English clime.
Haunt of the heron, here the swallow dips
In mirrored homage as your waters glide
Still far from where, between love-parted lips,
The sea shall take you to his lordly tide.
Distil for me your maiden magic here
Where willows worship and your gentle stream
Sings lullabys upon a lazy weir,
Beguiling time itself to stay and dream;
There is no need, sweet prodigal, to bring
The kingfisher to vaunt his sapphire wing.

Harleyford Manor

HERE where the Thames flows, not in space but time.
And quiet years in mellow beauty fade,
Stands an old house where knarled wisterias climb
On rosier bricks than ever builders laid.
And here, like some long litany of love,
The past lives on, immortally alive,
Preserved by long-dead hands as though to prove
That there were arts by which the dead survive.
Here, too, time passes but, as rivers flow,
Its course still gleams, through all the leagues behind,
With book and bust and portraiture to show
The lovely reaches of the human mind.
O, gracious house, for you no time has fled,
Quick in their beauty are your painted dead. *H. W. Harding.*

Fragrant the Night

FRAGANT the night air, cool and sweet,
Like perfume of a woman fresh and young,
Wafting a vaporous peace with lazy dreams
That seeps into the pores and senses,
Breathing deep;

Chatters the rain tenderly veiling
Earth and the brooding velvet sky.
Splutters the rain dispersing fragrant scent
Lest mortal ecstasy in that delight
Should burn with maddening fever by its breath
To fly at will upon the free clean air,
So infinite. *Leslie D. Knights.*

I Shall Come Back

DO not lose heart when silence shadows Hope.
Gather more close your cloak of gallantry,
And wear it ever, proudly confident,
Smiling as when I left.
I shall come back.

Perhaps not quite as when that autumn dawn
I held you closely in my arms, and knew
Your eyes were closed against the trait'rous tears,
Not thus—perchance—but yet
I shall come back.

It will suffice if even what is sent
Is service in another sphere for me.
And you are left to tread remembered ways
Without my hand—yet still
I shall come back.

The very air will be so filled with me,
That when you move or breathe our spirits each
Will be united inescapably.
To-gether-two in one.
I shall come back.

H. Trevelyan-Thomson.

I Know a Valley

I KNOW a valley
where no mortal foot
has trodden
for a hundred thousand years.

It lies asleep
between two purple hills
that guard and keep
it's virgin solitudes.

A tiny stream
runs twinkling there
and laughs and babbles
between shining stones;
and wild things gather there
with shining eyes
and fluttering wings,
and little furry beasts
with quivering ears
and tiny pattering feet.

And I will take my harp there
and I will sing my songs there,
and all the furry things
and fluttering wings
will gather there
to listen to the music
of my strings.

I will lie down there
thanking my God for grass
and every living thing:
for every weed that grows;
for trees and winds and rain
and clouds;
for eyes that see
and ears that hear.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

And I will praise the Lord
that I can breathe
the air of Freedom
'neath an English sky.

William Booth.

The Stranger

YOU were the stranger in the street,
Yours was the voice in the speaking dark,
Yours was the song the stars repeat,
You were the keeper of the park
Where the gate stands wide,
And the price is pride.

You were beside us, watching, when
Death fell from out the search-lit sky.
Yours was the tongue that told us then
"Danger is done. Men do not die."
Yours was the only glory
Of the sad story.

You are the hope, the only one,
For the days to be, for the days that are done.
Dear Stranger, I will speak your part
'Til the cold reaches my heart.

(Sergt., India Command.) *J. B. Stocks.*

Airborne to Arnhem

WHEN any tell of courage, we shall say,
"We saw the Men of Arnhem fly to Hell,
Above the spire, where the insistent bell,
Out of the blue September Sabbath day
Called them in vain, to Harvest Festival."
They to a greater harvest sped, in haste
To reap, before the evil storm laid waste,
The golden grain of Freedom, for us all.

Oh, deck the festal altar with their fame
At harvest time; remember how they stood
Within a square of fire; and name by name,
Praise them for valour and for fortitude.
Ring, bells, to call them from the morning sky,
Airborne to Arnhem and to Victory. *Margaret Sheppard Fidler.*

Desert Island Poems

(See the July issue, page 195)

With the Editor's permission I have postponed until the next issue my report and comment on this prizeless competition, as lists are still coming in fast and I want to consider as many as possible. My first impression has been of the enormous range of "favourite poems," for many of the entries have not a single poem in common. If time permits I will analyse the replies, and publish an approximate list of the thirty poems which appear most frequently, in a rough order of preference. Meanwhile, if you are sending in a list and have not already done so, will you please do so at once? Christmas Humphreys.

Poets and Pretenders

SIMPLICITY, and that unsophisticated air of kinship with natural things, even though it be manifested in war poems, is to be expected, and welcomed, in Russian poetry. In that country the impact of a widely diffused education has not yet produced a general sophistication among poets, with its complication of motive and response, which in other lands obscures the clear vision which the poet needs, and is fain to cloud the face of truth itself. So we were glad to receive yet another anthology of translations from the Russian, this time made by Alan Moray Williams and Vivian de Sola Pinto called *The Road to the West* (Frederick Muller, 5s.), even although the contents are war poems and are not, therefore, so generally typical of the normal Russia. Yet it is good that the English world should have these reactions of a simpler people to a universal scourge, and to note the universality of detestation for war among natural folk. The translations are, we are told, faithful to the original metre as well as to the sense, and we are therefore presented with as clear a representation as possible of the thoughts and feelings of our great Ally. For much lies in the choice of metre, almost as much as lies in the clef of a musical composition.

"Loving all things on earth in our own way
We were compelled to fight against earth's lies
for the earth's truths
that's to say for ourselves,"

seems to sum up the creed and the simple pride of the Russian attitude; and all the way through this book there is the same uncomplicated directness in which literary urbanity would seem out of place. We realise, of course, that with translations which have adhered to metre, and which still rhyme, there must have been a lavish expenditure of literary art on the part of the translators. Suffice it to say, then, that it was of that high order which conceals itself and has left untouched that artlessness which is the stuff of poetry.

Very different sounds the work of Susanne Knowles in *Birth of Venus* (Macmillan, 4s.) which, as the dust-cover has it, comes from an educated and sophisticated mind. Why mind, and why sophisticated? Poetry comes from a deeper well, and the suggestion of artificiality in the adjective is scarcely complimentary when applied to a poet. But let us examine the book. The poems seem to be of an objective sort, being about whatever fancy has entered the writer's mind, and, therefore, we suppose the dust-cover was discriminating enough. Indeed, these poems are artificial, too, in the sense that they are not the fruit of personal, emotional stress, but were composed calmly enough in the exercise of the craft, or art, if you will, of versification. That is to say, then, they are incapable of evoking the emotion of the reader.

There are some sonnets among the poems provided, and we would point out that these, for some reason, while beginning as Shakespearean, have sestets on the Petrarchan model; moreover the rhythm and general balance leave much to be desired. We believe in the art of prosody and especially in the rigid disciplines of the sonnet form to teach it. It is, therefore, in our view a pity not to take every advantage of those disciplines, and a great mistake to slight them; for great benefits flow from the refusal to be content with technical imperfections in versification. The prolonged mental effort which their complete defeat sometimes entails seems to encourage that

deeper emotional percipience which has been checked upon a difficulty of expression. We have often remarked that there is always a way round any difficulty in the mechanics of verse-making, and the way round may be as much the work of inspiration as any other line in the poem. If there was an inspiration, an emotional impulse, to begin the poem, the mood can be revived and kept quick for days until the poem is finished. What poet has not experienced this, and felt the sudden emptiness and bereavement when the last revising word is captured and the poem done?

A request for criticism by a soldier on behalf of an Allied publication of verse, is almost a command, and it is therefore unfortunate that with all the good will in the world we cannot go very much further than mere compliance. The anthology called *Puptent Poets*, which is the subject of this request, is very well produced and contains more matter than even the most well-disposed reviewer could possibly read. It is therefore difficult to do justice to it on that score alone, but a conscientious dipping and browsing discovered so copious a display of the usual unpretentious, Service high-spirits, flavoured with youthful cynicism, that we were nearly enticed into an easy dismissive generalisation. But there were exceptions, here and there, from the uproarious and the wise-crack, and things that were sober and even ambitious of depth. Listen to "Sniper in France":

"The wonder of it stopped him where he was
Stood him up straight and lean, and for a time
He lost the jungle prowl. The heavy slime
Of stealth unloosed his feet, the awful claws
Of fear released what they had stolen . . .
A little town of France was in bloom there,
Its cottages white petalled. And the air
Carried in its arms the sun and scented pollen.

He was home. This was no foreign place—
He stood upon a little friendly street
In Pennsylvania, and it was sweet,
And loneliness made wet joy of his face,
The sniper's bullet struck him then. The pain
That instant made him animal again."

Well done, Private Donald J. Titus. You've got something.

But the urge to any expression in verse is still something, even when there is no poetic mood nor perhaps the poet's mind or aspiration to inform the pen. It suggests that a special importance attaches to rhythmic utterance, for most minds, and while that belief prevails, and while upheaval and danger make reality of that belief in the most unlikely quarters, we can be sure of the fundamental identification of man with metre and the undefeated, in fact invincible, appeal of the old prosody.

Another anthology, more select in the aesthetic sense and therefore more manageable in size, but still from the Services, is *Four in Hand*; the four horsemen, or steeds, in question being Messrs. H. Brennan, T. Davies, J. Hewett, and E. M. Frost. But here is no Apocalypse, but Art for Art's sake, in a depressed area, so to speak, illustrated, unamusingly, with painstakingly peculiar drawings by Frank Bowman.

Mr. Brennan opens with a poem "Bitter Weather" from which we take

". . . mere mud
Will put lips to him and suck away his strength
And wind set on his little thimbleful of fury
With enough of shrieking, slashing madness
To set the full moon guttering;"

This is a fair sample of his contribution and is very familiar to readers of modern poetry, and the rest of the cavalcade offer much the same sort of thing. Thus Mr. Davies, "On Seeing Men Going to the Front," exclaims:

"They would die now
Could they rape with their childlike stares
Despair draped above their eyes;"

and Mr. Hewett asks in his first piece:

"Do you remember Christ
The dead soldier at the tomb mouth
Amongst the bombs;
Caught in the narrowing circle
Of the bullet rain falling?"

While Mr. Frost brings up the rear with an "Elegiac Portrait, Italy, 1944."

"Holding the funeral air, in a black gown bell-blown
from the dead musicians, from the ungainly vine, from parched
unprofitable ground, from dark and double-spinning
dark, from dawn to death—holding the funeral air
The easy sun stampedes across the wound."

Which is all we have space or patience for since the whole does less than nothing to portray Italy for us except as a phantasmagoria of incoherencies which not even a lost war excuses.

Perhaps we shall be permitted at this juncture to attempt something which, although not in our usual line, may not be entirely beyond our competence. The intrusion, at this moment, of *Letters to a Young Poet*, written by Rainer Maria Rilke (Sidgwick & Jackson, 7s. 6d.) would, however, seem so apposite as a corrective, long overdue, to the above and similar aberrations, that we make no further apology. What could be more appropriate, anyhow, in such an article as this, as an inquiry into the mental and emotional techniques for writing poetry, conducted by a master of the art for the enlightenment of a friend. The interesting thing is that, Rilke's work has more than enough incoherence and obscurity in it to make it dangerous to use as an argument against these very things, but nevertheless it has the one great and overmastering difference from that of his imitators—the delicacy and sincerity of a mind completely introverted. This is the state of mind to which inspiration comes, and that Rilke's mind was clouded and doomed to end in insanity, is the only reason for his incoherence; he expressed his inspirations as he could. But this is quite another matter to that incoherence of the extrovert, seeking to emulate the mystic with a heavy-handed allusive scrambling of words, in a search for esoteric meaning, which is so daunting a modern tendency. Such work is a self-conscious imitation of the artless, consummated with a literary skill which we are sure would have astonished Rilke,

but would have aroused no faintest envy within him. So the lesson which Rilke strives to instil into the mind of his correspondent, Kappus, is simplicity, acceptance, patience, unself-consciousness and, above all, a folding into himself in a sort of sensitive isolation, to await the enlightening and reconciling impulse of an inspiration which, in his case, was so clear and undefiled by conscious art that even his obscurities can thrill and his incoherencies excite. The human brain is, we suppose, a marvellous organ, but do not let us forget its subsidiary and subservient place, nor seek to promote it to a lonely and unfitting eminence where it may make all the motions and noises of greatness without one single overtone of that immortality which it can never share, but which true greatness of any sort must have.

It is appropriate enough, too, at this point, to consider a reprint entitled *Some Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Michael White, 2s. 6d.), for he was another of those significant and single-minded poets whose enraptured incoherencies have prompted (not inspired) so many imitators. We do not, of course, endorse verbal obscurity nor seek to praise and encourage it, but nevertheless, when it is unconscious and the product of extraordinary emotion, as in this case, or of a dreamlike introversion, as in Rilke's, there is always a quality in it that silences objection by some hypnotic power of its own, which threatens (but, alas, never quite succeeds) to plunge us into the emotional gulf or elevate us to the triumphant pinnacle wherein or whereupon it was first uttered. The point is that emotional states cannot be simulated by mental effort and therefore that those who can should express themselves in plain English, forgetting the incoherency but remembering the simplicity and the unself-consciousness which are also, and very importantly, the basis of all good poetry and especially that of Hopkins and Rilke. Of this new reprint it is sufficient to record that it contains all, or nearly all, our own favourites and is a welcome addition, therefore, to the year's harvest.

So much for the mystical, although in fact, the word is perhaps ill-used for want of a better, and now for something quite different—clear, cogent, musical, and lively —something with that controlled gusto with which *Punch* has been identified for so many generations. This is a volume *Poems*, by "Algol," Mr. C. H. Bretherton (Frederick Muller, 6s.), reprinted from *Punch* and many other journals "in and between the two great wars." Every time we open this book and there have been many, it has opened, very refreshingly at a poem called "Jugs, Jugs . . ."

"When I go down to Boar's Hill
That's hard by Oxford Town,
I drink the song of nightingales,
I drink—and who shall frown—
The ale they brew in Oxfordshire
That hummeth bright and brown.

When I go down to Boar's Hill
That's over Hinksey vale,
I drink the smell of gorse and pine,
I drink—and who shall rail—

The ale they brew in Abingdon
That is a noble ale.

When I go down to Boar's Hill,
Where noted bards reside,
I drink great draughts of taintless air
I drink—and who shall chide—
Great draughts of ale in little inns,
And let the poets bide.

It is impossible not to be delighted by such things as this. The inevitable recoil, in each stanza, from the spiritual to the material draught, is so exactly attuned, in its urbanity, to our English ear for humour. But there is plenty more, wherever the book opens, to delight the reader, all with the same perfection of technique but not, certainly, all humorous. There is fare of every kind and all of it good, of sound workmanship and, as is inevitable, lit sufficiently often with that inspiration which will always come to the accomplished craftsman in the stress of his loving labour.

A different compilation indeed is *A Minor Georgian's Swan Song*, by Fredoon Kabraji, with portrait (Fortune Press, 8s. 6d.). What can we say of this beyond that it is full of variety with little simplicity, that it has merit without emotion, and was assuredly not written without self-consciousness in a fit of subjective musing. Yet much of it has beauty in expression and form, but alas, it remains, unmagically just that, however the author tries first this mood then that, and however he rings his changes of metre and style.

Mr. Kabraji has used his mind too well to touch our heart. So we content ourselves with an acknowledgment of his skill. The work is clever, indeed unusually so, but if it set out to trouble our deeper feelings it has failed. One quotation, a fair one we think and hope; although in so varied a collection it is hard to select, or prefer, one "experiment," as the author calls them, before another.

"Not all my days are spent in the bleak
wastes of toilsome, spinning wreaths
of thought, but sometimes, a little wind
stirs in the dark, clammy tomb
of my dead heart and breathes
a ghostly sigh—till from the womb
of night comes a faint sunrise streak
of living rose to kiss my sleeping eyes
with rumour of a strange sunrise
to break within my mind."

Scoop Books, Ltd., return to the attack with another eighteen-penny booklet entitled *Time of Violence*, by John Kincaid, which presents the same cerebral characteristic as most "modern" stuff in many of its pieces, but is enlivened for us by half a dozen sonnets in a near-Petrarchan form, loosely rhymed, we suspect by intention, but interesting, not only for themselves but for the truly modern itch, which these variations indicate, to break the set prosodic rules.

"An age must end. And we, despoiled and torn
Should we weep now, turn up grief goaded eyes
Or cast across the wind a net of sighs,
Or drape our minds and teach our days to mourn?
The phoenix song was loud as we were born,
The strident quavers rang in all our joys,
And through the ecstasy of morning's poise
There stirred the tremors of an ancient horn.
No requiem: we were not kin of these years gone
But prisoners within their barren wastes,
And though this fury tears the tempered zone
Where we made laughter-spirals in our breasts
We must not moan. Destroy the dated maps!
Our eyes were moulded for more moving shapes!"

This we think the best of the six, but the citadel has not fallen to this sonnet deft as it is, and subtly lawless. Sonnets are not only difficult in their technical demands, they are even more so in their spiritual. Certainly nobody will ever write a good one objectively and with the mind.

There is certainly something new, not modern, in *Fables and Satires*, by Harold Morland (Routledge, 7s. 6d.), well illustrated by Helen Kapp. While it is true that there have been few masters of the art of fable, satiric or otherwise, in verse, besides La Fontaine and Gay, we do not think the volume before us makes a serious attack upon that situation. Yet there is much good reading for those whose taste rejoices in such things; which have no universal appeal unless lit with rather more humour than are these. One of the short ones which has a real epigrammatic flavour is "The Lion and the Chameleon":

"The Lion jibes: 'Change colour so,
And never know
What coat I'd really on!
I'd scorn to do it! I keep true.'

'With half your strength, me too!'
Sighs the Chameleon."

The technical achievement, so all-important for things like these, seemed to us uneven in places and the faults were such as an author as skilled as Mr. Morland could, no doubt, have eradicated had he been of a mind to it.

The claims of dust-covers do not as a rule err on the side of diffidence, and when we read that an author is by reputation the greatest Scots poet since Burns we assume some exaggeration in the pursuit of sales. *Selected Poems*, by Hugh MacDiarmid (Maclellan, 6s.), does not in our view lend colour to this claim, but we can heartily agree that he is the most "Scots" poet since Burns. Indeed we had a difficulty, which we never encountered with Robbie, in understanding much of him, and this despite the advancement of education in Scotland in the last hundred years or so. Listen to this:

"Brade-up or sclafferin, rouchled, sleek
Abstraklous or austerne

In belths below the brae-hags
And bebbles in the fern."

This is a purer affectation than ever Burns was guilty of, if indeed he was ever guilty of any, and poetry (or verse) so written offends every canon by which worth-while poetry may be written. There is a great deal of similar verse in this volume, and if stripped of its vernacular we suspect it would read flatly enough. Much that we could construe certainly did. But not all of it is in such broad dialect and, in his serious moments, he has given us good things. From "A Moment in Eternity" we quote the first two stanzas which show a rare delicacy and sensibility:

"The great song ceased
—Aye, like a wind was gone,
And our hearts came to rest,
Singly as leaves do,
And every leaf a flame.

My shining passions stilled
Shone in the sudden peace
Like countless leaves
Tingling with the quick sap
Of immortality."

This is a long poem and is all good, but its modern form is for that reason a severer disappointment. A poem of this sort ought to sing with a natural rhyming cadence, whereas it has a studied rhythm which gives it a self-conscious air as of something carefully, though beautifully, constructed. It might have had that artless-seeming spontaneity which would have driven it home to the memory and so increased its significance a thousandfold. This quality of memorability is a basic necessity for poetry and it provides the prime test of its influence and value for human beings; for it connotes the quality of music which is as necessary to man as love. Something in us responds to song, something which responds only to those stimuli which have nothing intellectual about them; and we are so made that when this response is forthcoming the cause, whether it be a picture, a sound, or a poem, is hard to forget even by those whose memories are not very retentive. Art has only this one justification, that it should dwell undimmed in the minds of men and exert a constant influence upon human thought and action. That is why poetry should not only not be cerebral, with a mental appeal only, but also should, by its musical character, touch more surely and poignantly those immortal emotional chords which alone can make the effort of memory as nearly unconscious as an errand boy's whistled tune. We believe that most people do not need even to think about such a question as this; it is one of those things which are instinctively known and accepted by the vast majority of human beings. The minority have gone astray upon a mental effort, substituting reason for instinct in an impossible search for something new which should be achieved by a painstaking mental skill, and yet penetrate into the hidden depths of spirit, without that key for sensuous beauty which alone can open the way to that permanent lodgment in the memory for which, if anything, poetry exists. But Mr. MacDiarmid may object that our digression does him less than justice. We agree. His work has beauty, and it is the beauty of the spirit, often enough; and while we read we are persuaded and enlightened. Yet when we put his book down we can

recall too little of that beauty; and we can recollect no moment of thrilled excitement at the subtle falling together of his words into music which printed upon our hearts the unforgettable phrase. We ask ourselves how much of it could spring unsummoned to the tongue to enhance those moments of true living when we are inspired by our own delight in beauty; and we answer that these good things refuse to leave their pages and so can make no permanent record in our consciousness.

Anonymity is always a challenge to a reviewer, arousing, as it unreasonably does, that hope of discovering immortality, cloaked in modesty, which legend and some fact has recorded. *Thirty-Five Anonymous Odes* (Fortune Press, 5s.) desires to stand upon its own merits, according to the dust-cover, though why the author's name should interfere with so inevitable a fate we do not understand. But let it be so by all means. It is a reviewer's impossible duty to be just, according to his lights, which may, however, be dim.

Some of these pieces are of the ode, odious. The spirit behind them is not seldom coarsely violent, with a deliberate will to antagonise with that superiority of a cursing prophet for whom the polite usages of speech are waived.

But whether the mood be mild or fierce there is a bit too much of that synthetic unusualness which, while being clever, is still tiresome, and is not poetry:

> "The beast smoulders within your rancid eye,
> Queen of the evening . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> Whose two breasts like a sword are lifted up
> To slay my O inconsolable lip."

The anonymous writer is misled, and achieves nothing, with this sort of thing. He is more himself, and more significant, when he is simpler; and stronger, too. Only with simplicity of word and thought is the heart wooed.

> "O Time, O ancient Oak,
> Is the whole arm of the past unknown to me?
> Will that which was prophesied
> Be? Or am I the enemy? Am I
> The only truth, brash in my warlike livery
> For whom the future is no whit delivery?"

With this ode, and it is by no means alone among the thirty-five, we are in considerable accord for in this the poet has forgotten himself, in a better sense, and no longer stands between us and his words. In it he reveals a power which is not aggression and a strength which is not violence.

We think, sometimes, that the title of this article should be less sweeping in its abrupt antithesis in description; for so often those who are undeniably poets, pretend. Should our head-line not be "Poetry and Pretence"? For every one who aspires is not always inspired, but may encourage the aspiration notwithstanding. Then we get the cerebral and the synthetic, the will to shock instead of the thirst to sing, for the spirit is in the power of the mind, the least immortal part of us, since matter is indestructible even by atomic bomb. But there is some virtue perhaps in the more

challenging version, for it is certain that there exist true pretenders, knowing no better, and driven onwards by nothing but ambition. For they have nothing to say, yet insist on saying it with a technical skill which is, for them, enough to deserve the laurel of poetry. We were moved to these thoughts by *Tryst with Life*, by Elizabeth Browne (Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa), and give expression to them with no pleasure but in the interest of that sincerity which alone has value for its object. The book is enormous, as books of verse go, and we will quote the first stanza of the first poem as quite typical, in quality, of the whole.

"Now, to-day this golden chain of culture
That has been forged by past generations
Is being redly broken and torn apart
By some uncanny and ferocious vulture
Whose wicked, treacherous machinations
Are striking at the core of every heart."

Brian Hill is a familiar name to us, familiar as an occasional contributor to this REVIEW, and we have received from Favil Press his second volume, *The Sheltering Tree* (3s. 6d.). Our reaction to it is not enthusiastic, but somewhat disappointed as at a promise only half-fulfilled. The poems purveyed to us are too slight for any serious praise, and yet we would find no fault with them. It is simply that we gained the impression from them that they were written, in idle moments, by a man of sense, sensibility and skill, who was not concerned with the deeps, nor even aware that it is the inescapable duty of a poet to explore them. Of their genre, however, these poems are excellent, but that excellence, necessarily, is a matter only of treatment, of delicacy, technique, and verbal grace. Mr. Hill should now put these considerable acquirements to harder and more worth-while use. He could be a poet an he would.

What then shall we say of a book with the unusual title of *Games with Words*, by H. MacAlpin (Pendulum Poets, 1s.), which makes no pretence to poetry, but yet achieves it here and there? A first issue of a new series, it is, as its title indicates, a lively booklet, full of gusto, to be read, enjoyed, and forgotten. None of it, indeed, is memorable, but, as a pleasant occupation for an hour or so, it is deserving of some praise.

"In torrents innocent of art
Your urgent say is said.
We recognise your bleeding heart
But where's your bloody head."

is a sample of his humour and here is another, topical enough, called "Geopolitik":

"Poles apart
rejoice my heart:
Poles en masse
reputedly exhibit a regrettable miscomprehension
of socio-political exigencies without giving a
damn for any resultant impasse;
Alas."

In short an interesting production, alert and alive and not without its own tavern music to give it flavour.

A poetic drama, *Caedman of Streonshalh*, by Alice M. Knight (Abbey Press, Whitley, 5s.), reaches us. Such things are a rarity and hardly quarry for a poetry reviewer unless he is qualified to pronounce upon its dramatic aspect also. The book is written in a free verse without any great distinction of language, but with tenderness and an obvious sincerity.

From the United States of America comes another volume, *Under a Tropic Sun* (Driftwind Press, $1.75), which, while arousing little response in our breast, yet, by its entire absence of self-consciousness, certainly prevents our placing its author, Juliet Brooke Ballard, among the Pretenders. The pieces are as descriptive as nice chatty letters home from her tropic isle, and while written in verse, do not seem to ask to be taken for anything more. There is inevitably, however, here and there, that faint adumbra of poetry which always comes to the self-effacing versifier; and will come more and more frequently if the art is pursued with the same singleness of mind. Here we see it shyly peeping:

"The humming-bird—deserted
Deep-throated blossoms quiver;
And leaves make low, concerted
Sweet murmur like a river—
Wind to a song converted
That names the sea as giver."

Poetry, London calls Mr. Herbert Corby a war-poet, which is perhaps inevitable on the dust-cover of a volume called *Hampdens Going Over* (Nicholson & Watson, 4s. 6d.), but we should have called him more than that. However, here is a book of war-reporting by a member of the R.A.F. which impresses at once with its sureness of touch and matured talent. Something is said, worth saying, without fuss or parade, yet with vigour and an illuminating insight. There are many sonnets, but these are not Mr. Corby's best metier for, besides a modern disregard for exact technical form, he uses them for themes unsuitable and so, fatally compromises his chance of success, For a good sonnet is not only a form, not even mainly one, but a delicate triumph of expression and perception in the emotional hinterland, in which excitement slumbers for the ever-awakening eye of the attentive reader.

It is in other things in this book that we take most pleasure and where we find most power. In a poem called "Three Tail Gunners" is this passage:

"He loved all living things, and with no pose
tried to transmit the weather of his feeling
to map-marked cow, to golden-girdled bee.
What happened in his turret no one knows,
but now with fixed eyes awful at the ceiling
he talks to frenzied things we do not see!"

We feel guilty at making a mere extract from a poem which is all good, or indeed in making any selection at all. This is a book to read the whole of. It never pretends, for there is no need, and it is as fresh as the wind and as vital. One would say that Herbert Corby has almost the habit of inspiration although, he too, is content at times with aspiration. But men being human there is small wonder in this and Mr. Corby

hides it well. [Mr. Corby's distinguished Greenwood Poem, "Pendle Hill," in the September 1943 POETRY REVIEW and Mr. Herbert Palmer's commendation will be remembered by Poetry Reviewers.]

As various as man himself is his poetry. *Poems to his Blind Mistress*, by R.P. (Oxford University Press, 6s.), is described as a sequence. There are many sonnets woven into the chain, but these, so different from Herbert Corby's, so much more polished and urbane, are still without that endemic fire which is the sonneteer's triumph. These have a cerebral savour, and therefore lack that reality of conviction which distinguishes the things of the spirit from those of the mind. Indeed we would say of the whole of this book that it has the same defect, and this can never be wholly compensated by the mechanical excellence of form and language. Deep as the thought may be, however sound its conclusions and skilled its presentation, we cannot be moved by more than an admiration; and this is not enough. For a poem should inspire love and awe, as a thing beyond the mere contriving of man and as an echo of immortality.

From the same Parnassian stable, but of quite another gait, is *Cut is the Branch*, by Charles E. Butler (Oxford University Press, 13s. 6d.). Here is such emotion as could never spring from the mind, born of a habit, constantly displayed, of feeling before thinking, and so conditioning the whole of existence to seem but a prelude to Eternity. How surely and swiftly we get away from prose, when emotion responds in us, responds like a plucked string to the feeling of the poet.

"If for the dream of England,
Powerful, cold and wide,
None but the humble dreams
Of Englishmen had died:

Her dream might be forgiven,
The deathly pride condoned,
And England's soul be shriven
And all her wrong atoned—

But with the tears of England,
Fall, in an endless stream,
The terrible tears of the world
Wrung for an English dream."

Written by an American soldier this has, by grace of its simplicity, a quality which is neither of the words nor their arrangement, but is the fruit of an emotional perception which has used the brain, almost unconsciously, for expression only. This is not an easy thing or poets would be legion and pretenders unknown, but Rilke knew the secret and conveyed it. We can only recognise it and indeed it cannot be disguised. In a beautiful sonnet "Bomber's Moon" it is implicit everywhere:

"Endymion, the night is different now,
Though from the shadowed east the round moon still
Climbs to the sky above the curving brow
That marks the summit of a timeless hill.

Though in the starred cold sky the silver drift
Streams to the islands and the silvered sea,
Not to her loveliness men's eyes will lift
In some enchantment of a memory

Endymion, across the world to-night
The great dark fatal birds you did not know
Will lift their wide and moveless wings in flight,
Heavy with death for men who wait below.
Sleep, shepherd, sleep, within your memoried light.
The moon will guide the bombers as they go."

If this has a fault, it is in the absence of the usual rhymed, final couplet with its hammer stroke, so that this sonnet seems to slow up and peter out. But it is a fine thing nevertheless and something to be grateful for.

We are never very impressed by publisher's statements that Mr. So-and-So's verse is full of the spirit of the Highlands or the South Downs or some place, and so we were not filled with high hopes to hear that *Tony-Pandy*, by Idris Davies (Faber, 6s.), was an expression of the soul of South Wales. Much of its content anyway was about anything but that portion of the gallant Principality, in fact a good deal was obviously written in and of London.

"In Christopher Wren's Cathedral
I heard Dean Inge lament
The lack of care in breeding
From Caithness down to Kent."

This is from a long poem (112 verses, all to the above pattern) which concludes the volume. Entitled "I Was Born in Rhymney," it is a sketch of the author's life and experience from his genesis down to autumn, 1943. Trite enough in substance, the stanza above quoted is a fair sample of its quality. If there is other and better work between the covers, there is nothing of particular moment and the quality in general is slight.

Anthologies are difficult things to review, and in writing a notice of *New Lyrical Ballads*, another of the Poetry London series (Nicholson & Watson, 4s. 6d.), we have not even space enough to catalogue the names of the authors selected to contribute. The compilers are Maurice Carpenter, Jack Lindsay, and Honor Arundel, who are also represented as contributors, ten, nine, and four times respectively, which is fairly handsome. We observe among other names, those of Alun Lewis, Herbert Corby, John Pudney, Idris Davies, and John Manifold, which is guarantee enough of fare both varied in quality and in kind.

We have already indicated sufficiently clearly, in a previous article, what our policy is in relation to privately printed books of verse, and we see no reason to reverse our decision or revise our views. The test of fitness for publication is certainly acceptance by an established and competent publisher, especially since in our experience the standard demanded is not excessively high. But there may be exceptions to any rule

without thereby abolishing it, and we should desire to notice *Canonbury Watch Farewell*, by E. S. Hole, both for its lively self and because it is a personal good-bye to fire-watching comrades by one of them. Mr. Hole writes with a competent vigour and may well, now his fire-watching days are done, settle down to a serious attempt upon a professional publisher. We remember, from a previous example of his work, his mastery of the rhymed couplet, of which he is apparently still fond. In this latest booklet he justifies that preference again.

The second exception is *Thirty Sonnets*, by a member of this Society, William Warbis, and we accede to his request because we conceive him to be entitled to our views, and also because he has offered us sonnets. If he has read this article he will have learned what we believe to be necessary to the making of a good sonnet, perfect technique and latent fire. To write sonnets of good form is not difficult, where the rub comes is in the latent fire; and it is the sad truth of this matter that when a sonnet succeeds, by virtue of this incendiary quality, it is the greatest work of the poetic art; but when it is unlit it is the least sufferable. One may not even fail greatly and the worst form of attack is to persevere too ardently. These things do not come in thirties even to a Shakespeare, and we know of nothing so necessary to be written under what used to be called a "divine afflatus" as a sonnet. Of Mr. Warbis' efforts we can say that he has elegance, eloquence, good form, and that his sonnets read as easily as they should. But that is as far as we may go in commendation. His sonnets were composed apparently under no overmastering or absorbing compulsion—that rare but requisite condition for their conception.

The third and last is *The Seeker*, by W. R. Hughes (Friends' Book Centre, 2s. 6d.), which strikes us as more competent than most self-published poetry. In fact we have seen worse with a publisher's imprint; and there is an independent mind behind a good deal of it, if not much emotional fire. That is its vital lack, of course, and one for which the mind is incompetent to furnish a substitute. To feel first and think afterwards is a good slogan for the poet, and the feeling should be deeper than the thought always.

* * * * * *

NIKOLAI POTASHINSKY sends from Moscow a special note on YOUNG SOVIET POETS: Literary and other activities of young Soviet poets who have recently appeared in print are in one way or another connected with the war. Many of them were in the armed forces and their first literary efforts appeared in front-line publications. Others, mostly women, took a direct part in the war effort on the home front. The war and the war effort, therefore, form the subject matter of their work, some of which is now appearing in book form.

Quite a number of those who showed talent gave their lives for their country. Perhaps the most outstanding of them was Lieutenant Alexei Lebedev, who served with the submarine fleet. His two books of verse published before the war: *Kronstadt* and *Lyrics of the Sea*, contained vivid descriptions of the Baltic seascape. In the first winter of the siege of Leningrad he wrote a great deal and was preparing another book of verse. In the spring of 1942 the submarine he served on was sent on a roving mission in the Baltic. He took with him the manuscript of his new books of poems,

most of which he had previously read at writers' meetings, intending to give his verses some finishing touches, before sending it to the publishers. The submarine was lost after having sunk several enemy ships, including some warships. All the crew perished. The first two books of Alexei Lebedev's verse have now come out in a new edition.

Semyon Godzenko, who is now 22, took part in the defence of Moscow and Stalingrad, in the liberation of the Crimea and in the storming of Belgrade and Vienna. He has been awarded six orders and medals. Before he joined the Red Army as a volunteer he was a student and specialised in Slavonic literature. Since 1942, when some of his verse first appeared in the monthly magazine *Znamya* (Banner), he attracted considerable attention. His war poems, which appeared in various periodicals. have now been brought out in a small book *Poems and Ballads* and have been favourably received by the reading public and critics. The book definitely shows that Godzenko is a forceful and original poet. There is an extremely grim quality in his descriptions of the war and life in the trenches, which he does not attempt to hide by glamourising his images. And yet his verses are full of youthful sentiment. Recently Semyon Godzenko read his latest poems at a meeting in Moscow. These showed the same severity in his treatment of the peace and also the same passionate desire to create, to make life beautiful.

Soldiers' Song is the title of a small volume of poetry in which are represented ten young poets: Mark Sobol, Oleg Polevoy, Alexander Lissin, Vassili Glotov, Jacob Belinsky, Victor Uran, Vassili Grishayev, Grigory Gorsky, Alexander Romanov, and Nikolai Tkachev. All are officers or men of the Red Army. Their first efforts were published in front line army newspapers. Though each one has not yet enough material published for judgment to be pronounced on their relative merits, it is obvious that each of them has his distinct individuality. The features they have in common are their poetic culture, mastery of the achievements of Russian poetry, faith in the power of the poetic word and in the strength of beauty and justice. Another common feature is the tendency to contrast the creative forces with the destructive properties of the war. The same features are characteristic of Galina Nikolayeva's poems which recently appeared in *Znamya*. She was an army nurse in the war. Her poems are war pictures combined with love motifs. Other young poetesses who have been published are Veronica Tushnova and Galina Morozova whose poems show excellent technique.

The number of young poets appearing in print is constantly increasing. It is almost a mass invasion of the field of poetry by representatives of the young generation who, only recently, were engulfed in the war effort. Both those who fought and those who worked in the rear bring with them the experience of a people's war consciousness, of the justice of a great cause brought to a victorious conclusion. This cannot but leave its imprint on the young generation of poets. It may perhaps even signify the beginning of a new Soviet poetry. So far this is only surmise, though the number and variety of young poets whose works have been published seem to point that way.

Dynamics of American Poetry: CVI

The Wild Boar, a second book by Robert Wallace Smith (Christopher Publishing House), is lively and interesting. He hails from Texas and describes himself as self-taught. It appears that Texas yields many poets. Happily there are some short, as well as long, poems in this volume. To them I shall turn. "When we are gone" follows:

For me, new silver on the waves;
For you, new pearls of dawn;
But where will be the gold we shared,
Ah love, when we are gone?

A long poem called "Seeing Shadow or The Woman of the Magic Plume," is very much too long to give. This phantom woman the poem describes as having much contact with the animal world. We quote one verse of this ten-page poem:

She was much concerned with Man, and pictured his the highest place
In the wonderment of Nature. Now and then her tongue would trace
Him toward a strange beginning far away and long ago:
Nature fashioned him from shadow into substance that would grow.

Perhaps the first thing one desires to know about anyone is where he or she was born, and if it be a poet, by what roads he advanced in poetry.

Lloyd Frank Merrell in *Healing Symphony* (Banner Press, Emory University, Georgia) presents an interesting account of his beliefs and impressions. We learn he has seen life from many angles. Growing up in Illinois he has been in some thirty very different activities. To name a few: common labourer, teamster, road and railroad construction worker, fireman, farmer, bill collector, clerk, salesman, waiter, dish washer, choir director, concert, oratorio and opera singer and milkman, etc., and for the past twenty years a minister in Michigan. His book is dedicated to the comrades who plunge in the sacrificial stream of life's imperishable symphony. His life suggests the self-imposed life Count Tolstoi followed, who desired to know, through personal experience, how the other half lived.

This poet, spontaneous, direct and warmly human, writes in lyrical figures a message important for today and tomorrow. "O when will hearts be found in love's design?" he queries. In just indignation against a mine baron he cries out:

"Man, like a captive bird, is banished
In cages that confine his wings;
But through the bars, till bars have vanished,
The prophet soars and sings."

In this book of some hundred odd pages there are short vibrant calls to the spirit of man. In "Pyramids" a clarion note is struck:

We build our pyramids of human stone,
With tombs of chiseled flesh in tiers outside
For kings who live long after they have died.
And though the sun should flood each mummy-bone,
The host of mangled men whose day has flown
Bears greater light. Beneath each cruel stride
Lies every Christ among the crucified,
And not on Pharaohed summits on a throne.

Fools that we were to build upon the sand
Of ruthless heels that crush a kindred breast.
Our towers of Babel—tombs for but an hour.
Now lean and crash. Oh, who will rise to stand
Not *ON*, but with mankind in mutual quest
Of love's fraternal pyramid of power?

Shall we try to hear what Mr. Merrell hears in his short poem entitled "Listen"?

Half-way between the house and shed
I dare not keep on going;
A sphery chorus overhead
Hosannas past my knowing.

Rush on if you will, I gorge like a fool
On quiet, starry thunder,—
On wine of twilight—pungent, cool—
Absurdly sane with wonder,—

Absurdly sure this loveliness
Could be a magic leaven
To blend the world's bewildering stress
In tune with the highest heaven.

One of the last stanzas in the book expresses the philosophy of this poet:

"Worlds of ineffable beauty are slumbering in my dream.
I am nebula and planet, and onto other nebulae;
I am the darkness, the light and the lighted;
I am sepulcher and cradle;
I am source and current, mouth and sea;
I am creator and created;
I am a melody where no melody lingers;
I am a swelling orchestra of love."

This kinship with all and everything that Merrell expresses reminds me of a sonnet of mine, published December 7, 1930, on the editorial page of the *New York Times*, entitled "Any Man's Prayer."

I am one flesh with all the things of earth,
The best and worse are both a living part,
The sweetest fruit, the puckered and the tart,
With all of these, with plenitude and dearth,
The fulsome hour and that of leanest mirth,
The Age's grace, the Present's graceless smart,
Flesh of their flesh, one with their throbbing heart
Until the last day fades in death—from birth.

Yet other things bestir in this mad whirl
Of matter—not of satin nor the sword—
To gain the which the spirit would unfurl
The last bright spinnaker the winds afford:
O prized of prayer. When the lone east turns pearl
I call on Thee and plead for Thy reward!

The theologian—the man in the street—the artist in any sphere—they would all find sympathy with Lloyd Frank Merrell in his recently published book.

Edward Fenton was born in New York in 1917, and graduated from Amherst in 1937. In February, 1942, he enlisted in the American Field Service as a volunteer to drive an ambulance with the British Army. After having been torpedoed he finally arrived in Egypt in time to join the Eighth Army in its triumphant African campaign. He is now living in New York.

Surely his war experience has given him a knowledge of how the soldier reacts, and in *Soldiers and Strangers* (Macmillan) he has given proof of it. "Catechism" is perhaps the most striking, and it follows:

What is your name?
A number.

Where is your home?
A place
I cannot now remember
with a calm face.

Where is your station?
Under
the bronze voice of command
irrevocable as thunder
I move as planned.

Where are you bound?
Wherever
the ship I board is sent
and lands me to deliver
your testament.

What is your faith?
One called it
a long word from a book,
though I, who must uphold it,
forget its look.
(But I see clear the faces
of those I leave behind,
and the outlines of lost places
cling to my mind.)

How long will you serve?
Forever
if need be.

While you live
what pledges do you render?
All that I have I give.

Yet all the world's abounding
words cannot decrease
my wonderment unending
as death, my sole release
buys your salvation: peace.

While the Past Burns, by Lillian Everts, is a pamphlet which has been awarded the Lantern Brochure Prize for "a major poem in an original form, contemporary in mood, broad in scope." From critics, when *While the Past Burns* was read over the air, and from the platform, came the following comments: "Succeeds in reflecting the entire turmoil of our day. . . . Very sweeping; should command time and space. . . . Like a piece of music expressing a whole rush of emotions. . . ."

Mrs. Everts' poetry has found favour with the radio, *New York Times*, etc. etc., and she is leaving on a three weeks' speaking engagement concerning this poem of hers. The author is a native of New York, who has studied poetics under the outstanding poets of today. There is a note of cynicism, excusably so, in her opening page:

Soon it will be done . . .
and then, new seminars of men
will get together again;
and at a bar or in a room,—

(between the hardened arteries of strange laughs)
will attempt to forget the ghastliness of the past,
by attempting to make the present last
until all trace will fade to make place
for a tailor-made parade of new events
cleared of all impediments.

On and on they will talk,—
even as their throats contract
with a cataract of fact
that refuses to remain intact. . . .

Sensing this inside, they will attempt to hide the truth,
by laughing louder and louder
and making more and more talk
with voices inculcating the grating of their inner thinking,
as the jumble of their outer sounds fall
on the listeners' black-board of wall,—
only to grow taller than tall. . . .
almost tall enough to erase all trace
from the past concern's face.

and, turning the page, we are reminded of the San Francisco Conference and all that it means to accomplish:

In sincerity,—
they will make every effort
to disregard the ghastliness of the past
that insists it must cling and hold fast,—
by talking perhaps of future Presidents;
of English Parliaments;
of Russia's prolific importance in world events;
of China's contribution to human monuments;
of the others and others too, united at last;
at last without doubt cutting up the good intent.

This poem is eight pages bristling with the sincerity, confusion and hopes of today.

Another pamphlet is Sarah Cleghorn's poems of Peace and Freedom—published by New York State Branch of the International League for Peace and Freedom. It is noteworthy that three books in review today are all of a piece! crying out for a fairer, better world.—Can it ever be obtained through bloody wars? and jails: Let us read "The Jail":

Is this a clinic, then, for ailing souls?
A shop for damaged manhood's skilled repair?
Life-saving station on the shores of Time
To rescue shipwrecked spirits from despair?

—Or is it but a refuse heap, to spread
Filth and disease, to threaten all mankind?
A furance for the shreds of self-respect?
A slaughter-house for crippled souls and blind?

We have in this collection stories of the miseries of mankind. They rhyme and scan and are interesting and impressive.

Very appropriate when our legislators are talking about five years of military training is "Armament":

In a green field, beneath a summer sun,
I saw two simple-minded gentlemen
Each desperately buckling pistols on.
Each, in a voice with horror overloaded,
With horror and panic, as if nameless danger,
Whispered what treachery the other boded.
"I would not hurt a hair upon his head,
But that he lies in wait to do me harm.
Quick, quick, more pistols!" both in concert said,
"Great heavens, he is arming! I must arm!"

This poet has found favour with the *Atlantic Monthly* and Chas. Scribner's Sons.

The writing life of William Rose Benét, brother of Stephen Benét and Laura Benét and husband of Eleanor Wylie, has his many years of writing crowned with the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for *The Dust Which is God* (Knopf). This novel in verse "makes a more than casual penetration of still another large province, that of auto-biography," in five hundred and fifty-nine pages Descriptive of America, we will read the following:

Hearts in the breast of our many-nationed
many-languaged sons and inheritors
you cannot stoop and sift the roadside dust
(And the dust also is yours!)
or life a blossom fallen from any tree
or write with finger on a running stream
and not partake
(Land of our hope forgive
our base betrayals of this
that rouse the mind's hot anger and make the numbed heart ache!)
and not in one deep brotherhood partake
of a new world and its undying dream!

American boyhood is amply described and vividly set forth in the section entitled "A Public Character." Mr. Benét makes a plea for the youth in striking lines:

Age has its wounds and wisdom its pride the scoring harrows
have harrowed its every field it knows and may not explain
Its trust in mercy but these fiery of great tomorrows
be with them god of the young uphold them again and again
that the bowstring sing ere the bright bow fall unstrung
that the full throat sing ere stricken of song to be sung
that their hope be not in vain O god of the valiant young
be with them god of the young!

We find an early love lyric which follows:

My lady and I together
with tugging rein and driven spur
breasted the mist by dune and pine
and for the way her eyes were mine
I would have died for her. . . .
smiling she curved against my side
half a dove and half a bride
whispering toward my side she leaned
seraph bride or lovely fiend
where in the moon the tide was made
along the wave-assaulted shore
of luminous lost Peridore
Ah, and the glimmering gown she wore
made my hot heart afraid.

In the following words is pictured his first meeting with Eleanor Wylie, who is called, in his novel, Sylvia:

All rose and dovelike gray and as though a mist
of silver were around her. . . .
Who is Sylvia
what is she that all the gods and delicate deer
in a chequer of sun and leaves and a ripple of bells. . . .

We give a line on death:

O that dying were only the proud advance of a ship
into mirrored starlight

His description of his first love, Dark Rosaleen, is thrilling. He met her only to lose her, for she entered the Carmelite Order. We do not find today many such lovable accounts of the first waking of the emotion of love. The day came, and soon, when the Order of the Carmelite Nuns proved too stringent and she left, and shortly was in the arms of our young hero, Raymond, and happily married, and pages are taken with the coming of the little family and his finally entering the first world war. Returning—and how well we shall have it impressed upon us shortly by the hundreds of boys returning—he felt life confused and complicated with its industrial and political questions which Mr. Benét takes some pains to describe.

Midway in the book his beloved wife dies and this drives him still deeper in the perplexity and confusion of life. And the meeting again of Sylvia seems not to bring tranquillity.

His characterisation in a few words of the characters who moved across the American screen is shrewd. There is mention of Raymond's turning to the art of painting for consolation after his room-mate's death. As his love increases for Sylvia, Raymond pens the following:

Sylvia wild and witty
and mockingbird and peacock you have seen
remarked perhaps how admirably God works
with flesh and bone remarked perhaps again
how sharp is satire remarked how cold
is the wind between the worlds or how the lightning

lashes the panther night remarked ev'n how severe
the great can be—ascribed all faults to genius—

and a little later, after other meetings, we find frankly a love poem.

You are all about me now
I breathe you with every breath
sharp as the incense of death
redolent of all delight
Your proud head and pale brow
bend over me in the night

Fierceness and tenderness
war in me night and day
My lips have little to say
My eyes fill quickly with tears
You are restlessness distress
and all my hopes and fears

You are more close to me
than my own shaken heart
No part of me is apart
from the ecstasy of you
You are instant in all I see—
the spur of all I do

How strange the world has grown!
Why are we kept apart?
Heart burning to heart
Kiss yearning for kiss
O what has all Time known
so incredible as this!

Through the last third of this detailed book Mr. Benét pays constant tribute to his brilliant wife and her sudden death in 1928. There is no phase of confused American life left out of this book. Following War I, he graphically describes conditions that followed England's suspension of gold payment:

BRITAIN SUSPENDS GOLD PAYMENTS The diluvian
American banking-system went Vesuvian
and banks closed left and right and Mr. Sloan
of General Motors (He was not alone)
slashed wages Workers in rubber and in steel
took cuts of ten percent were made to feel
the stringency and Edison was dead
Who lighted homes that fought for daily bread. . . .

We find the unhappy and lonely Raymond wandering about the cafés and gathering places and discovering temporary relief in other associations. His letter on poetry, describes more fully the genius of William Rose Benét.

April 21, 1945.

DEAR MRS. BARTLETT:

I am glad you are going to review *The Dust* for THE POETRY REVIEW.

You ask me to say a word on poetry. It seems to me that, despite the War, we have plenty of good poets today, both here and in England. Experimentation has reached a point where modern poetry needs orientation and clarification, and I think for too long now the excuse has been put forward that poetry seemed confused because the world was confused, and no way could be found out of the turmoil.

A way was found to strike down and manifest evil as practised by the Nazis and the Fascists. No choice was left the more democratic nations but to resort to arms. Now Europe is in ruins, and we have won the War, or at this writing are so near winning it that it is certain that victory will come. It seems to me that now all writers in the world, including the poets, can help in bringing reason to bear on international problems and in building a strong international organisation for world peace. They

can also be of great use in an attempt to create a more rational social and economic system in all countries, a system dedicated to justice and humanity and freedom.

Poetry should not be a cryptic expression for the highly intellectual and aesthetic few, though certainly it should retain its artistic independence and it will always operate on another level than that of prose. But where it continues to be *merely* cryptic, to choose pretense and the new fustian of muddled metaphor, to make confusion worse confounded, it will be sterile and will widen the chasm between actual life and a sort of nirvana of the unintelligible. We need clear thinking in the world today, exceptionally clear thinking, since we are confronted now with exceptional problems of reconstruction, of healing the world's wounds, of building a better world on the ruins of the old. Poets can help by speaking out. They have a public function. Not all poets can do so. Emily Dickinson, our greatest American woman poet, was an almost complete recluse. We will always have fine poets of the recluse type, and you cannot regiment poets unless you wish to destroy poetry utterly. I am merely pointing out that the word has power upon the world, and that the powerful word is needed today as never before. For this the radio is a new medium, a fine one, and through it one can counteract the jargon and huckstering that now it purveys too richly.

Perhaps it is just that I am an incurable optimist, but I could easily believe that after the War we will have stronger voices in poetry than ever before. Nor am I against technical experimentation; I would merely say, it is a means, not an end in itself. And all my life, I have worked for bringing poetry and people together. And the older I grow, and I am now nearly sixty, the more beautiful clarity seems to me.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

P.S.—I am moved to say a word to England about our great President, now dead. Franklin Delano Roosevelt represented to all Liberal opinion in the United States our highest aspirations, our profoundest hopes. The Independent Citizens Committee, of which I am a charter member, is dedicated—in the Arts, Sciences and Professions, to carrying on the hopes he cherished, the ideals he prized.

THE ENDURING FLAME

[During the twenty years of my tenancy as American Editor of THE POETRY REVIEW of London, I have so often vainly asked the American gifted poet, Harold Vinal, to write a statement on poetry for our magazine. His life is a very full one; as Secretary of the American Poetry Society his duties are endless, and as owner and editor of his own magazine his time is still further consumed. He has seven poetry volumes to his credit: *White April, Voyage, Nor Youth Nor Age, A Stranger in Heaven, Hurricane, Hymn of Chaos, The Compass Eye*, and I am happy to send to you his statement, made a few evenings ago on the typewriter in my drawing-room.—A. H. B.]

As so many times in the past, I had settled down after a delectable dinner with your Poetry Editor, Mrs. Bartlett, for an evening of poetry, one of those soul-searching evenings we have had so often. "You have never," she said rather sadly, "written a word of prose for the POETRY REVIEW."

I am one of those shy New Englanders (happily Mrs. Bartlett is one as well) who,

because of a desperate sort of reticence, never seem to be able to put down on paper the reason of the faith within one. The faith burns a steady flame, it burns apparently without reason, merely as flame, and the necessity of defining the conviction, the credo of a poetic belief, is to allow the flame to escape through the fingers and be lost in the telling. The moment one attempts to share a conviction, the conviction dissipates itself, and it is better perhaps to let one's faith express itself in the poem itself rather than in cold-blooded statements.

Having devoted a large part of my life to music, it was a natural transition to turn to poetry as a means of expression, from an interpretive to a creative art. I have never regretted the plunge into the bright waters of Lethe or the years spent in acquiring a technique which, at the start, was non-existent since my knowledge of poetry had been both meagre and academic. The growth in grace has been an almost fanatic conversion, a kind of religious experience, for like Saul of Tarsus I was at first stricken blind in a literal sense, blinded by the glory of the noble English tradition, as I suddenly read Shelley for the first time and beheld the awful signet of light itself on the brow of Keats.

In the intervening period the editing of a poetry journal has been both exciting and stimulating, the discovery of talent, the editorial privilege has been tremendous; but editing, say what you will, is a work-a-day occupation in a sense, and so all the while the happier mania of poetry making myself has been more consuming and its implications more satisfying personally. The writing and not the editing had produced the credo and the faith. Without faith of some sort, either religious or artistic, the human soul is without reason or integrity. And if the writer is unable because of regional barriers of birth and education to propound the doctrine, perhaps the faith itself is, because of that, more pure and eternal, being unlabelled and spontaneous. The poet, above all people, is of necessity compelled by the bright sunlight of his own drama, by the spiritual propulsion that germinates within him; and the making of good poetry cannot be successfully accomplished by mere artifice or ingenuous contrivance, though much written to-day might be defined as a rebus set down without either the benefit of punctuation or reality. Surely the poet is aware, if he be one, is not a mere mathematician, a purveyor of second-hand phrases, this mission and his enterprise is not profane but sacred, not commercial but above the usages of worldly and financial gain. This does not buy him a manor in the country, but at least it enables him to face his fellow-man with a feeling of having been true to himself and humanity. The bright flame will burn on when he is gone, and if he has warmed his hands before this immortal fire, tasted the manna of Poetry itself, his life has been nobly enriched in the interval.—HAROLD VINAL.

The Librarian of Congress announces the appointment of Louise Bogan, of New York, to the library's chair of poetry. She succeeds Robert Penn Warren and will hold the post for one year. Miss Bogan is poetry critic for *The New Yorker* magazine and is a poet in her own right, and has received a Guggenheim Fellowship twice—in 1933 and 1937.

May I endorse appreciation of "Spring Song," by Barbara Lea, in the May-June REVIEW—a pleasing contrast to Gerard Manley Hopkins! J. B. S. THOMPSON, Jamaica Plain, Mass.

The 1945 Shirley Carter Leigh Greenwood Poem Competition

REPORT AND AWARD

IN the Greenwood Competition this year, despite defects, which presently will be enumerated, the general level of quality is very high, rather higher than last year, and more than forty of the poems stand out, while nearly as many others attract the attention.

The prevailing influence has seemed to be Robert Browning, but sometimes there is a dash of Gerald Manley Hopkins. At any rate, good poems by Ian Serraillier ("The Sleeping Princess") and G. Harrison ("Vigil") show plain influences from Hopkins as well as Browning. But it is otherwise with the winner—T. E. Casson's "Orpheus and Dionysus," a poem about which I have not the slightest doubts. Rarely since I read Keats's "Hyperion," when I was a very young man, have I been so excited by a creation of classical flavour. But the influence is hardly Keats, neither is it Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, Tennyson or Bridges—poets who were even more classically minded than Keats. It is the voice of T. E. Casson, a poet about whom I know very little except that in 1938 he published a volume of Collected Poems over the name of Edmund Casson and that he lives in the Lake District and is a Wordsworthian. He ought to be greatly complimented on his refreshing treatment of traditional blank-verse. It is fully traditional, and yet how original in its soft, forward-flowing music, how individual in movement, how free from mannerism and strain. It is as if the gods were really talking, for there is a convincing lofty innocence in the diction which can only belong to the most high gods. The Simple and Exquisite are wedded to Profundity, and the classical prism is revealing of a solid body of modern thought, geological knowledge, and shining vision. Many of us have already thought in that way, though perhaps not so extremely and intensely. Pacifist, pastoral, aqueous, mystical, anti-industrial, anti-sensual, the poem sails right into the arms of the Christian vision, though without in any way clipping its pagan wings. Christianity which sprang out of the East was rejected by the East, and the earlier Greek vision which prepared the way for it, was also, in its finer developments, thrust aside. Swinburne's magnificent tirade has never been really justified, for the two are not necessarily antipathetic.

But, of course, the poem has a few faults. Now and again it is over-nebulous and cobwebby (though how I admire its gossamer texture!), and several of the short words don't seem quite the best possible. And when Orpheus says "This is the new God from the angry East" it isn't particularly clear what god he is referring to, though I suppose it is Dionysus. Also, the early part of Dionysus's speech (though excellent) is too emphatic in its contradiction, for he seems to support a part of the speech by Orpheus. And the terminating lyric is not, as a whole, quite up to the sustained singing level of the rest. But what a refreshing poem for the new Western era, and what an oasis in the arid intellectual desert of modern verse, very little of which comes out of the heart or the cells of spiritual passion.

The sand of the Waste Land seems to have entered even into some of the verse I liked or admired and set aside as worth careful reading for the prize, as well as that which I reluctantly rejected. They are patchy (a strange mixture of good and bad)

or they fail, for all their virtues, to get off the ground. Some are longer than their need (probably deliberately padded) and others are technically or verbally commonplace. At least half a dozen (including Ian Serraillier's) have let technique predominate at the expense of content, and in others the content has intruded at the expense of poetry and technique. Two or three of the longer poems which begin so very well, or are excellent in the first half, suddenly tail off because the poet has become dominated by what he wants to say rather than by the manner of saying, changing himself into a sort of metrical prose writer. The moralist or prophet or propagandist or philosopher or psychologist, or mere egoist has suddenly intruded rather too strongly, and sent the Muse to wander off elsewhere. Good poetry is a kind of marriage, a perfect blending of form and content, of technique and feeling, of thought and emotion, of craftsmanship and passion. The reader should not be too aware of either, of where one begins and the other ends. A real poem should captivate at once, entice compellingly and serenely (or even violently) and not bewilder a judge into fearing he is admiring too much or not half enough. Of course, there is such a thing as personal taste, but very good poems should overcome all prejudices, even violent antipathies against the author.

But there are other faults; one of which is the fault of Obscurity. But Obscurity can be of two kinds. There is the obscurity which really does seem to communicate something, which hypnotises by glamour of line or phrase, which so intrigues the reader that he feels forced to try to puzzle out the meaning or not worry about the meaning at all; and there is the other, rather banal kind of obscurity which merely bewilders or annoys. The poet is merely showing off, or he is aiming beyond his grasp and is inarticulate about something which he doesn't quite understand, or he is misled by a rhyme into writing nonsense, or he is afraid of being too cheap and easy, or he hasn't taken enough trouble to make his meaning clear, or he overrates his own powers, delighted by his adroitness with phrase, symbol, or metaphor, and thinking that because he has been very successful two or three times he can go on being successful for ever.

All the same there is one kind of obscurity which I have not met in any of these poems: that is the obscurity which is evil minded, which pretends to be Surrealism and is merely Dadaism, which is akin to the jollification of deliberate bomb-dropping on churches and beautiful buildings, which is out to make ruins for the mere sake of making ruins, which seeks to fool, dumbfound, leg-pull and stupify—call it Dadaism Tremens in its most cold-blooded aspects, and Tom-cat Dementia or Delirium Tremens in its drunken abandonment to a cynical bad habit—D.T. poetry. It has been a common feature of some of the worst verse of the last twenty years.

But I must get back to the particular items of this competition. Just before I turned up Mr. Casson's winning poem I was much intrigued by another very good blank-verse creation, "The Explorer of Heaven," by one writing under the pseudonym "Aquarian," which seemed to me a probable winner, and jostling it another narrative poem, but written in skilful rhymed lines, "Wanderlust" by the well-known American poet Stanton Coblentz. After that there were fine poems (if occasionally defective) by Wrenne Jarman ("Letter to Claudia"), Ruth Pitter ("The Father Questioned"), Dorothy Wellesley ("Windmill by the Sea"), Greta Briggs ("The Return"), T. W. Ramsey ("Comme un point sur un I . . ."), Dallas Kenmare ("Elegy for two Voices"),

H. W. Harding ("Hate and Love"). To which I ought to add a single sonnet, "Beauty is Deathless," by Eleanor Norton. The top of the short poems seems to be Dorothy Wellesley's, while Mr. H. W. Harding's two relative sonnets might have competed with the winner if content had been everything.

Mr. Ramsey's poem I don't quite understand. But it is of perfect shape, and has evidently been inspired by the French symbolists. Dallas Kenmare's "Elegy," though in free verse is, I think, very successful. One of the hardest things in the world to write is good musical free verse, because the poet is outside any metrical scheme or pattern, whereas blank verse confines the poet to iambs and trochees (with occasional anapaests) and keeps him from wandering off into prosaic space.

As regards the psychological and spiritual facts of Dallas Kenmore's impassioned rhapsody I am not quite so certain. Abelard remained a devout Catholic, and might disagree with her ending. But it is a striking piece of work.

There are several entries which run the top poems very close, which may even be their equals, and others which would be as good as anything sent in if only certain stanzas or lines had been rewritten, or redundant or unnecessary passages cut out, and others which attract me, though I am not quite certain about them. There is Kathleen Steed's "Prisoner," an uneven poem with a very fine opening (in its first twenty-four lines), and several narrative poems to add to those by Stanton Coblentz, Greta Briggs, Ian Serraillier, and the star-gazing "Aquarian," especially "Briseis" by Matilda Snow; "The Last Saga of Thors Hill" by W. V. Wall; "The Silver Box" by one "N. Gilbert Cheyne" (another pseudonym); "Rainswept Pilgrimage" by Arnold Vincent Bowen; "Hallucinations of a Wounded Poet" by H. N. Forbes.

Then there are several religious and "mystical" poems—"Cord and Bowl" by Mary E. J. Hughes; "Cosmos" by Sergeant Farrell; "Judas" by P. M. O'Connor; "Light" by Catherine Blakiston; "Invocation" by one "Vela"; "The Consummation of the Aeon" by Florence Mary Bradford. These last two poets seem somewhat puzzled or misled by the popular misconception about "the Millennium," and the fact that after the thousand years of spiritual and social well-being the Devil is again to be let loose and the world to be almost destroyed. (See the last chapters of "The Apocalypse" of St. John.) But the real fact of the matter is that the Millennium is over and done with and behind our backs. That prophecy of Saint John surely points to the coming of the Christian era, to the end of Paganism, to the approximate thousand years of Christian light—an era which was not very difficult for Saint John to forsee. The Christian era (as we know it) was ushered in by Charlemagne, and was either ended by Napoleon or when the German troops marched into Belgium in 1914. The lines (chapter 19) "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" and those lines which immediately follow and precede, read uncommonly like a prophecy about Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire (to say nothing of other aspects of Christianity), while the events of the last thirty years seem to be foretold in the middle of chapter twenty: "And when the thousand years are expired Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." Satan may be chained (by Christianity) but his friends and servants are not chained, otherwise what makes Saint John so certain that after the Millennium there will be such a devastating conflagration. Which means that the Millennium period assumes a very

strong residue of Evil, some sort of a menacing volcano to make all that possible at the end. So with all due homage to Florence Bradford's "Consummation of the Aeon," I don't think one part of the end of her poem quite hits the mark.

Poems on Man and the Destiny of Man which are relative to Florence Bradford's are "Prophecy" by George Shiers; "Posterity" by Alice Harwood; "In the Beginning" by Mary Mair; "The Bubble" by J. C. Lyth; "Man" by W. R. Latham (who was a top runner-up for the Greenwood Prize in 1943).

After which it is getting more difficult to group the poems. But there are two good sonnet sequences: "Patient Fury" by Norman C. Pallant, and "Seven Sonnets to Deirdre" by C. E. J. Tryer.

Poems from soldiers are "Five Year Theme and Variations" (a long dynamic thing written in mixed-up metrical verse and free verse) by Captain Dennis Birch; "To My Soul: An Ode" (written in a Prisoner of War Camp) by Thomas Demarden Williams; "Stradivarius" by Major T. Bouch; two short lyrics from brothers: "Ships" by Stephen Gardiner (Navy) and "For Sydney Keyes" by Lieutenant Patrick Gardiner; "Je n'ose . . !" (a long, rather sentimental poem, but containing some moving passages and fine rhythmical effects) by an adjutant who writes under the pseudonym of "William James Steele"; and "Kew Gardens in War-Time" by Arthur Ball. This last seems to me rather too long, but it contains fine lines and passages, and in the course of his meditations Mr. Ball has some pointed things to say about political celebrities:

> Sweet Thames, you know those men whom England loves
> For loving England when she shook with France—
> Churchill, who saved her, Eden, breathing honour,
> And Sinclair whose integrity is sure.
> But those of the base brood, conceiving shame
> While Hitler laughed, theirs is a grained ill-fame.
>
> Yet shelter one or two from scorn, my trees
> All leafless yet. Was Chamberlain a villain?
> He would have spared his land this sacrifice.
> The vultures batten yet, this side the Ruhr,
> As vice contrives to hide behind the sun,
> Vice, the enthroned inspirer of the gun.

Then there is a very long poem about soldiers: "Death and the Soldier" by Jean Kenward, and a short one, "Death and the Young Man" by G. A. Wagner.

Other poems I set on one side are "No Surrender" by the well-known South African poet, Arthur Shearly Cripps; "The Forest of Stone" by Phyllis Hastings; "On the North Downs" by Gilbert Chadwick—but a poem which has little to do with the Downs, though the opening stanza is finely descriptive:

> Here is no sound, no motion: all are lost
> Within the double death of Fog and Frost,
> A sterile rigor binds the long, steep ridge;
> And there's no stir of beast or bird or midge
> Here on the scarp or in the plain below,
> Nor any tale of human to-and-fro.

Then there is a poem from Virginia which rather too obviously has been inspired

by Eliot's most distinctive repetitive manner—"Silence" by Sanford A. McGavern; and last, but I think not least, an opulent and somewhat uneven poem with a fine opening: "Sunderland Point" by "Porphyry."

A distinctive feature of the competition in general has been the large amount of blank verse, and blank verse which has been well handled. And a little of it has even been written in effective anapaests. The third year of the Greenwood Competition has not gone out in smoke, and the general quality and direction of the poems seems to imply that we are at the beginning of a new Renaissance in Poetry. The prize of £20 goes with enthusiasm to Mr. Casson, but I am sorry there are not half a dozen more prizes, and I regret that space and time do not allow me to mention quite all the most prominent poems.

HERBERT PALMER.

SUBSTITUTE FOR SENSE

The article "No Substitute for Sense" in the current number of THE POETRY REVIEW, providing such a welcome addition to this controversial aspect of modern poetry, has reminded me of a reflection by George Macdonald on the same subject. It may interest you:

"The heart of poetry is indeed truth, but its garments are music, and the garments come first in the process of revelation. The music of a poem is its meaning in sound as distinguished from words—its meaning in solution, as it were, uncrystallised by articulation. The music goes before the fuller revelation, preparing the way . . ."

London, W.2. DIANA M. MOORE.

A. D. Shandley (Coventry), apropos the Premium Editor's comments, asserts:

Writing is all.
Writing is living.
The quick, full, battling, exacting
Spilling of inspiration.

So swans in the green river,
Hands like the flight of smooth-necked swans,
Hands bringing music, mastery, delight,
From the dark weeping soul of the spheres.

Come from your caverns of soundless grief,
Spirits that ebb and flow and steady the heart's beat,
Bring from the dead white centre of the stars,
Some of eternity,
Some of infinity.

Summer of black saddled, earth pounding harvest,
Winter of gift gulling, damned ebullience.
Gone by, the stink of petrol,
The dun voice of the wireless
And the smell of dinner.

AN ENLARGEMENT OF THE PREMIUM OFFER

For above a third of a century this regular premium competition has been a continuous feature of THE POETRY REVIEW—a record and a service truly unique. The premiums paid have varied and have been provided by the fees received for criticism—pertinent, pungent, helpful comment which used to fill several pages of the REVIEW, but which now, since space can no longer be spared for even so particular a service, are sent by post. A succession of Premium Editors have devoted themselves with reasoned sympathy and a critical enthusiasm to an arduous duty which has been a great advantage and encouragement to thousands of verse writers who aspired to write poetry and sought that recognition which is the poet's due. To win the Premium has been a coveted distinction, the proud parsley crown of our day, more valued and valuable than the accompanying monetary reward. We might, therefore, have eliminated the latter and garnished the bard only with that redolent herb, letting the honour suffice; but pessiministically enough we have decided to increase the monetary prize to £10 per issue and to establish it at that figure. This is done in the hope of raising an already high standard (since Art acknowledges no perfection) by increasing the number of competitors and inflaming their ardour, and without regard to the inevitable additional demand which will be made upon the Premium Editor's diligence and impartiality in his search for true poetry. His labours have often, hitherto, been rewarded by sparks of genius and even more often by the sincere appreciation of his discoveries. Let us hope he will find his reward in an increase in both.

The £10 may be divided into two or more sums at the discretion of the Premium Editor. He hopes always to be in difficulty in making a single award, but believes he will be obliged, if past experience is any guide, to do so; only in cases of real uncertainty will he compromise with his courage. The simple "standing orders" governing the Competition will be found below.

Apropos, the "tea and talk" meetings of the Poets' Fellowship—a verse-writing group within the Poetry Society, including competitors and contributors to THE POETRY REVIEW—will be resumed on Wednesday, October 24th, when the Premium Editor hopes to meet as many contributors and friends as can attend or for whom accommodation can be found at 33 Portman Square—tea at 5.30 p.m.; tickets (which must be applied for by October 8th) 1s. 6d. each.

THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

The above announcement of a handsome increase in the amount of the Premium Award in future coincides with a vastly larger number of entires for this competition and a distinct improvement in their general quality, as though by some telepathic foreknowledge of the news. If the shadow of this event can produce so great an accretion to my labours, I fear to contemplate the result of its actual impact upon them. But the net through which future entries must pass will be more finely meshed and will be drawn closer, and the arbitrament more merciless, with no sops nor crumbs of comfort for mere virtuosity. Be good then, sweet competitors, and let who will be clever.

But to my report: In our last number I dealt with that sloppiness of the emotions, Sentimentality. To-day I am moved by another, and less ghostly sloppiness, that of

technique, bad rhythm, forced rhyme, misspelling, faulty punctuation, and the like, which it is such a relief *not* to find in a poem that one's judgment is in danger of being biassed unduly in favour of what may be only a very ordinary piece of work. It is, however, true that the real poet commits none of these nuisances, for he is incapable of them. The poet's mind is an exact and an exacting one, loving a meticulous accuracy, accustomed to an intense concentration upon detail, as upon whole conceptions, and as exigent with his own work as with that of others. These lapses, therefore, are, in some sort, an indication of a want of poetic quality in those who make them, and as a general, working rule I find it an admirable though not an infallible test. If a competitor has been too slack to count his syllables, or the beats in his line or, having done so, has been unable to observe the fault, or too lazy to correct it, it is more than likely that the poem will exhibit an insipidity and a flatness quite in keeping. Forced rhyming is perhaps a commoner failing, and for that reason I cannot make so sweeping a generalisation about it. This, however, also springs from an indolence, or a pessimism, which accepts a second best either as preferable to further labour in revision, or as unavoidable. If, therefore, I am less sweeping about it, I do not wish it to be regarded as less deplorable. When it comes from a lack of faith in the opulence of our language to afford the answer to any difficulty, without compromise, I would suggest that it is less hard to find a way round than to remove the mountain which, we are assured, faith can do, and therefore it will pay those who really wish to succeed in their art to believe, with an absolute conviction, that there is, in fact, a perfectly satisfactory solution to every problem in prosody. If one believes in the existence of anything it can usually be found, for however arduous the search it will be encouraging.

Upon this matter of search and research into the recesses of the conscious mind I would say a word. Hurry is the habitual tempo of our lives, and few of us spend enough time in contemplation, or brown studies, wherein time is of less consequence than enlightenment. That is why we so seldom write as well as we wish and hope to do, and feel a disappointment with the finished work which is, if we only knew it, the exact measure of our deserts. We compromise too much in the interest of speed, and neglect the virtually unexplored but misty hinterland of our own consciousness, where await us, as likely as not, unguessed-at riches of insight, of music and of spiritual truth which only require time to become available for the adornment of our work. And, in saying this, I do not forget the sudden inspiration, effortless and swift, which the fortunate know so often and the rest of us so seldom; but gold is not always to be delved for; sometimes it out-crops or gleams in the beds of streams and needs but gathering. In general, however, and for most of us, the making of poetry must be a matter of slow, unhasting and unhindered dreaming, with the wakeful mind ready and alert to weigh whatever may arise from those depths of contemplation where we may find our treasure.

One other thing is pertinent to this report and that is the present astonishing popularity of the sonnet. I am delighted to see this, for those principles of versification in which I believe so thoroughly for their tempering and sharpening effect upon those who respect them, cannot be better learnt than by a constant practice of this, their strictest manifestation. I cannot say, yet, that there were many outstanding successes in sonneteering in this entry; and there were too many of that original variety in

which the rhyme schemes varied, at the writer's whim, from mixtures of the two most famous forms to arrangements which merely evaded difficulties. To such I would say that Shakespeare and Petrarch were greater than they, with truer ears and a finer sense of balance and finality than ordinary men. Moreover, their forms, unchanged, present illimitable opportunities for even the most talented, since the world has been set an almost impossible standard by them. Nevertheless, these discouraging reflections ought not to diminish anyone's ambition to challenge an old supremacy, and this can only be done upon the same basis and despite the same difficulties. But this is not all, for a more serious fault, and a quite common one, was the lack of that over-all balance which is the prerequisite for a good, or even a tolerable sonnet. There are fourteen lines, a rigid and, in the Petrarchan mode, an unusual rhyme scheme and, with these factors to accommodate, it is of the highest importance to subordinate the rhythm of expression to them. An examination of the sonnets of the masters reveals their understanding of this necessity. There is in their work always that insistence upon what may be called total rhythm wherein the sense pauses at line endings and sentences are quatrains, saving in the sestet of Petrarch or the last six of Shakespeare, where still, however, a suave and unbreathless balance is preserved. In Shakespeare's sonnets the final couplet, the hammer-stroke, is always a clearly defined entity in itself, sometimes, but not always, a separate sentence; but the separateness is not of the sense but respiratory—that natural pause for breath which we indicate, by some rhythmic necessity of our beings, by a full-stop, a semi-colon or a colon, but which does not break the smooth and even flow of the meaning. Keep before your mind the axiom that the sonnet should read as easily as prose, and you will avoid instinctively, or reject instantly, anything which spoils a natural rhythm and so looks, and is, awkward for the reader. He can gather your sense easily only upon the rhythm of his own unconscious breathing.

The other absolute necessity for a good sonnet is a strong inspirational impulse. This emotional condition is essential, of course, for all poetry but seems, somehow, more insistently urgent for this short, tight ejaculation of poetry. The presence of this fire in the sonnet is, indeed, so urgent that without it the result is almost intolerably dull; but with it, it becomes unquenchably vivid and exciting to read. That is, of course, the power of all inspiration, wherever it be found—a fire which springs from the spirit to speech and from speech to the spirit like a prairie fire; and I was never more forcibly reminded of this than when I came across a fine poem, "Recessional," by W. H. Bartlett, for which I have highly commended him, and which is obviously afire with a flame caught from the last competition's winning poem, "Exequy." Here it is:

Where the shadow of the bough
Flickers on the clover now
Soldier, whom we sent to die,
You have laid your body by.
Poppies in a crimson riot
Breathe an air of caverned quiet,
Buttercups discover gold
In a heart which grew not old,
Steal, from frozen orbs, the light

Lidded in an ache of night;
And the wee forget-me-not
Keeps false vigil by this plot.

Far above the leafy bough
Soldier, you are soaring now,
Threading through a maze of stars
In a life that knows no wars,
Pausing by the milky stream
Momentarily, to dream
Of the time when timorous man
Climbs to his empyrean.

Here, the creeping shadow fingers
Every lovely thing that lingers:
Slender grass and frail flower
Flourish for an azure hour;
Leaves, a-whisper summer through,
Rust and rot in fetid dew;
Moth and jewelled butterfly
Flutter down eternally;
Furtive mole, delightful swallow
Tumble into death's dark hollow,
Each a universal part
Of the earth's unfeeling heart.

That which lies beneath the bough
Soldier, is not needed now;
Soul and body spirit-spun
Indissolubly are one,
Seeking kingdoms yet-to-be
Veiled in flame of ecstasy,
While we fuel our grief anew
On the clay that is not you.

The interested may be instructed to compare the two poems, both beautiful and both full of emotion, for although Mr. Bartlett's "Recessional" is, as it were, derivative, there is neither plagiarism nor insincerity in it, nor indeed anything to qualify its claim to be an original and authentic poem. It is, on the other hand, a magnificent instance of the impersonal quality of genuine inspiration; and the pleasure in Miss Jean Kenward's lovely poem "Exequy," which Mr. Bartlett has expressed to me, will be duplicated by Miss Kenward for "Recessional," for both of them are poets.

The winner of this competition is Charles Bruce, who also scores two commendeds. His poem "Fisherman's Son" was too freshly lyrical to resist, with its genuine tang of the sea, as native to this side of the Atlantic as to Nova Scotia from whence the poem came. Its strong simplicity, its economy, the unpretentious adequacy of its expression to which meaning is all and words the servant, its brilliance which disdains to shine, all combined to confirm and reinforce my faith in the imperishable vitality

of the old traditional ways of poetry. We print it here for your pleasure and profit:

Now I am thankful this unbroken flesh
Has known hard rowing, and the trenchant bite
Of cold salt water, as reluctant mesh
Came up at sunrise from the tidal night.
Wisdom was in the brief recurrent shock
Of bodies braced against a plunging line;
Familiar meanings in the liquid knock
Of building swell concerned with buoyant pine.

Only in some dark hour of stress we learn
How strength and wit lie dreaming in the brain.
Now at its need the wakened mind shall turn
An oilskin to the dictatorial rain.
What shall a little wind of words avail
Against a heart close-hauled, with shortened sail?

As is right and proper the lists, both Highly Commended and Commended, are long in a large entry. This worried me slightly in spite of a natural pleasure at finding so much that was good. But why should it not be so? You are all studying to improve and have done so; and the proper distrust of my own judgment (for so delicate a task as this) which will not harden into a cock-sure self-confidence, has served, probably, rather to sharpen my perception than to cloud it. We are glad our overseas groups are coming forward and hope more will enter.

Highly Commended

T. M. Auld, Twickenham;
W. H. Bartlett, Tiverton;
L. E. Brodie, Alverstoke;
Ellode Collins, Bournemouth;
Michael Delarche, London, S.W.4;
W. R. Latham, London, N.W.3;
Phyllis Lyth, York;
I. M. Mills, Roydon;
Jane Scott Parsons, Derby;
Juanita Peirse, London, W.;
H. Broadberry Seaman, Ruislip;
Ivy F. Smytheman, Auckland, N.Z.

(The Editor intends to make a feature of the highly commended poems in each following issue.)

Commended

Pauline Barrett, Halifax, Nova Scotia;
Major T. Bouch, Warwick;
Charlotte Boucher, Halifax, Nova Scotia;
Rachel E. Boulton, Winscombe;
R. H. Bowden, Sawbridgeworth;
F. T. Bratton, Wallingford;
T. E. Casson, Pennington;
Kathleen M. Clark, Bradford;
Mary Cornell, Beverley Hills, Cal.;
C. E. J. Fryer, Maidstone;
David Heggie, Bramhall;
Phoebe Hesketh, Rivington;
G. H. Kirkus, Accrington;
Alice Miller, Oswaldtwistle;
James Crawford Milne, Arbroath;
Diana Momber, W.R.N.S., Falmouth;
E. Gordon Oxenham, Harrow Weald;
Nancy Pollok, Penn.;
Dorothy Rose, Barnet;
Harry Sefton, Lytham;
Pte. Margery Smith, Kendal;
G. A. Squires, Norwich;

Francis Stephenson, Crymmych; D. E. Christine Tomlin, Diss;
Muriel Symmons, Salcombe; Joan Willson, London, S.W.5.

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is now stabilised at £10 per issue. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach "The Premium Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by October 15th, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired, 5s. should be sent. It is essential that entrants to this competition be members of the Poetry Society or registered subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author marked "For Premium Competition." (Entries received after the formal closing date are carried forward to the next adjudication.)

TO THE PREMIUM EDITOR: Having been taught the general principles underlying the art of versification by my father, the late Professor W. W. Skeat, of Cambridge, who had himself studied the subject, I was greatly surprised to find, in your recent Prize Poem "Exequy," the rimes "sun" and "come" regarded as admissible. I had always been taught to consider them as imperfect or false rimes, though they may be regarded as illustrating the principle of assonance or agreement in vowel sound only which underlies so much of Spanish poetry.

I also found in this short poem the rimes "mignonette" and "bergomot," also, a few lines earlier, the rimes "red" and "colonnade," in which cases we have agreement of final consonants *only*, not of vowel-sounds. With regard to the riming of "icicle" with "pool" a few lines above, the former vowel is so indistinct, that some persons might regard it as possible—though a good reciter would hardly agree with them.

I do not remember that any such new varieties of rime (more frequently though incorrectly, spelt rhyme), have occurred in the works of our most musical English poets, such as Shelley and Swinburne. Is our present-day generation therefore to consider that former scientific accuracy of harmonious expression may now be sacrificed in order to meet the special exigencies of artistic imagination.

Baliol Cottage, Sedbergh. B. M. SKEAT, PH.D.

THE PREMIUM EDITOR replies: As a purist in prosodic rule and especially in "rime," I am in agreement with Miss Skeat in her criticism of certain false, or even non-existent, rhymes, in Miss Jean Kenward's premium-poem "Exequy; but technical imperfections are, after all, but technical and, unless they are unmusical or unrhythmic, can be disregarded in a poem as good as this, and debited, as it were, to Poetic License. The ability to snatch a grace beyond the reach of art, that art which Miss Skeat so properly defends, is something which we should encourage, if it be done as pleasantly as Miss Kenward can do it; and I cannot accept the implication, in the question which ends her letter, that there should be any such thing as "scientific accuracy of harmonious expression" in any ultra-rigid sense which forbids the graceful variation, the impromptu grace-note, or the occasional flouting of the pure rhyme for some equal but lawless charm.

The Poetry Society offers a premium of £50 for an unpublished poetic drama in one act. The theme and form of the play is left entirely open. The entries will be judged by a small committee of the Poetry Society and the final choice made by Mr. E. Martin Browne.

All entries must be typewritten and bear the name and address of the author, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, and should be addressed to "Poetic Drama Competition," THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, before October 9, 1945. The winning play may be published in part or whole in THE POETRY REVIEW and will receive special consideration for separate publication and may be produced by or under the auspices of the Poetry Society: other publishing or performing rights will be shared with the author. Offers may be made for the publication and (or) production of highly commended entries.

This competition anticipated the announcement of Mr. Martin Browne's season of new plays by poets at the Mercury Theatre beginning on September 13th with *The Old Man of the Mountains*, by Norman Nicholson. It is highly significant that the poets are again provided with a stage, however small, on which they may find their way back to public life and influence, and perhaps restore thereto the inspiration and expression they once gave to the theatre Anyhow, here is another opportunity for that desirable reunion, for the return of fine speech and exalted feeling to the theatre, the most aristocratic form of drama, packed with spiritual vitamins. Members of the Poetry Society, who have an obvious interest in this restoration experiment, are encouraged to take a practical part in its fulfilment by the offer of a free complimentary ticket with each four seats they book for a Monday or Tuesday evening performance or a Thursday matinee. Tickets must be applied for at the Mercury Theatre, 2 Ladbroke Road, W.11 (Park 5700), and membership certificate produced or number quoted.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LIVING POEM:

Ghosts linger in the darkening air
Hearken at the open door;
Music hath called them, dreaming,
Home once more.[1]

In Professor G. Wilson Knight's new book, *The Dynasty of Stowe* (Fortune Press, 10s. 6d.), it is the music of words that has brought the ghosts of Stowe to life; in one arresting passage, indeed, they discourse with their re-creator, and, touched as they are with the breath of eternity, are more alive perhaps than when clothed in flesh and blood. They are certainly alive in the pages of this strange and hauntingly beautiful book.

Once the home of the Temples and the Dukes of Buckingham and now a famous public school, the great mansion and grounds of Stowe have a quality of enchantment rivalled only by Versailles, and in some magical way, vividly felt and portrayed with wonderful artistry by Mr. Knight, it seems that the place itself is a poem, that here the spirit and inner being of great poetry has found mysterious incarnation. So this is a book for poets, just as Stowe itself was a "paradise" for a great English poet,

[1] Walter de la Mare, *A Song of Shadows*.

Alexander Pope, who said it was to him "as near an approach to Elysium as English soil and climate will permit." He loved the place, and visited it often. Congreve praised it, and Fielding wrote in *Tom Jones* that in such spots as Stowe "days are too short for the ravished imagination." Thomson, too, wrote of it in *The Seasons*, speaking of "the fair majestic paradise of Stowe," and there is a fountain in the grounds called "The Seasons Fountain."

The word "magic" derives from the Chaldean word *maghdim*, which means wisdom, and also what we understand by the term philosophy. So it is peculiarly true to say that this book is magical. Every subject Professor Knight writes of is touched with Prospero's wand, even what may seem such unlikely subjects as public schools, geography, and "Summer-term in War-time." But what are wisdom, philosophy in the best sense, even what is called "magic" itself but imagination, the sovereign power which clothes the commonest object in "celestial light"... In this light, indeed, nothing in creation is seen as "common".

So it is fitting to end a small notice of a big book with a quotation from the chapter called "Geographical Notes, ' which begins with geography and ends—of course—with poetry:

> There are inexhaustible opportunities for bright drawings, representing the coloured life-stream of the earthly or heavenly bodies . . . that life for further understanding of which we must go to poetry, as when we turn our coloured chalks to setting out the mountain cataract of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, flowing through nature to an ocean of death beneath a rainbow-tinted dome, or listen to Shelley's *Prometheus*, that great song of man's liberation and earth's awakening. If there is one document in the world's literature which we need most sorely to-day, it is Keats's *Ode to Psyche*, honouring the time when.
>
> holy were the haunted forest boughs
> Holy the air, the water, and the fire.
>
> It is precisely this contact which the creators of Stowe, in architecture and lake, in temple and grove, possessed, but which we have lost (p. 110).

And it is because this sense of the holy, of reverence, has been lost that

> We have taken the circle from art and put it to work in our factories; we have borrowed fire from heaven and turned it into explosives. We have made slaves of the gods our ancestors worshipped, and suffer for our impiety (p. 109).

Certainly the "men of action," the politicians, the militarists, must turn to the poets, the philosophers and men of God, if we are to recover the lost wisdom: DALLAS KENMARE.

When the mother of Rupert Brooke died it was found that she had carefully preserved her son's school books, including a very rare copy of *The Bastille*, which had won the Rugby School prize in 1905. This little treasure of eight pages in grey wrappers fetched £70 on July 7, 1931, and joined the library of the late Sir R. Leicester Harmsworth. At Sotheby's lately Mr. Mathews gave £72 for it. As much as £580 was paid by Mr. Blackwell for the two volumes of the Lyrical Ballads of Wordsworth and Coleridge, 1798 and 1800, with an additional stanza to the *Ancient Mariner* in Coleridge's hand.